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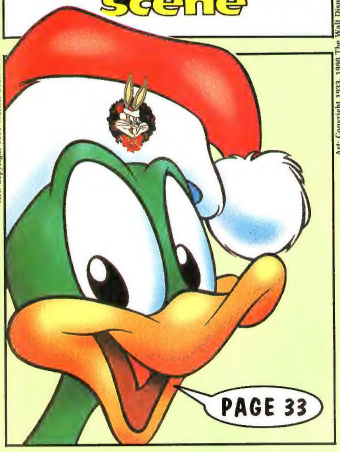

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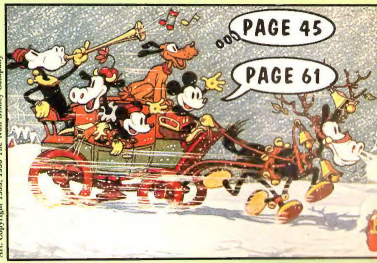

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WORD BALLOONS

Weather Report

It must have been like thunder, the appearance of those first comic books on the newsstands almost 60 years ago. Suddenly, the funny folks who frolicked through Sunday morning newspaper color and weekly black & white could be found in booklet form.

Soon enough, there were new characters to entertain...new villains to hiss...new adventures to experience. And then, like thunder, Superman and Batman and Captain America and Sub-Mariner and Captain Marvel and the Spirit and....

It's hard to imagine what those initial comics meant to youngsters enduring years of Depression, World War II and the aftermath. Were those comics just something new yet routine, read only to pass the time, or did the paper crackle with energy? When you turned the page, did it sound like thunder?

I wasn't around to read those comics firsthand nor was I literate in the repressive '50s when the EC horror titles arrived, bringing with them the fresh clean smell of the grave right before a thunderstorm. But I could read, did read and well remember the excitement of the early '60s when Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko unleashed the Marvel heroes. And I was there for the first media-spawned comics frenzy as Batman went "camp" just like his TV show.

That was a time when readers were thunderstruck by each new issue. Eagerly, I would rush to the 7-Eleven every week to see if the latest *Fantastic Four* or *Strange Tales* was out. Just as the movies and the smell of buttered popcorn intertwine in my mind, the memory of those exciting comics is forever mixed with the distinctive scent of Cherry Slurpee.

Here's how exciting it really was: I would be zooming about on my bicycle, paying little attention (as usual) to traffic. A car would thunder by, just miss me. And my first thought would be, "Great Caesar's Ghost! If I had gotten killed, I would never know if the Silver Surfer got his power cosmic back from Doctor Doom!" (Not, that is, unless there were newsstands in Heaven—and there *must* be.).

But nothing lasts forever, as Puff the Magic Dragon knows, not even little boys. Perhaps I've had a childhood longer than most, but I too grew up—I think it was in the late 1980s—and though there's the occasional whisper of excitement about the approach of a new title or a project (like *Arkham Asylum*, *Enemy Ace: War Idyll*, *Elektra Lives Again* or *Owlhoots*), there's just as often the sense of world-weariness, jaded cynicism, the I've-seen-it-all attitude of the Hollywood gumshoe. And then there's the disappointment when the heroes don't live up to the hype, when the villains are felled by one's own greater expectations, when the story doesn't crackle after all.

There still *are* times when thunder roars. Just a few years ago, I awaited with that same old gimlet-eyed eagerness the publication of each issue of *Watchmen*. Oh, that was a time, but like everything else, it ended.

Can I imagine, can *you* imagine, what it was really like to read new, freshly printed, just out on the newsstand, those landmark comics of the '30s and the '40s and the '50s? No, I guess we can't, but I *know* what it was like in the '60s and the '70s. And we all knew the excitement (what there was of it) of comics in the '80s. We lived it.

In this holiday season, that's what I wish for you all—to find the comics of the '90s, the ones you can't wait to read, the ones which crackle with the energy cosmic, the ones that seem like thunder.

—David McDonnell/Editor

COMICS SCENE RETURNS next year, but we're really *not* sure with what. OK, there *will* be some ads, photos, artwork and a number of spiffy page numbers. We *will* go behind-the-scenes (again) on **Tiny Toon Adventures** and **The Flash**...and yep, we'll do other things, too. Find out what else in **COMICS SCENE #18, on sale February 26, 1991.**

LETTERING

Art: Leah Rosenthal

Personal replies are **impossible**. Other fans & advertisers may contact readers whose letters are printed here. To **avoid** this, mark your letter "Please Withhold My Address." Otherwise, we retain the option to publish it. Write:
COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue So., 8th Flr.
New York, NY 10016

...I have been reading your magazine for a few months now, which has been great for me, since it is generally very difficult to find any kind of comic books or publications down here in Colombia. There is no need to say that I love the variety and treatment of subjects in your magazine.

I would like to make a special mention of an article that came out in your #12 issue about an "unknown": Grant Morrison. I mean an "unknown" because as I said earlier, comics *do not exist* here; however, I have been able to obtain some of the latest (and sensational!!) graphic novels through a few friends from Brazil, especially of Batman such as *Dark Knight Returns*, *Killing Joke*, *Son of Demon*, *The Cult*, *Year One*, *Ten Nights of the Beast*, movie adaptation, and also *Elektra*, *Watchmen*, *Black Orchid*, *Wolverine* and *Destroyer*, etc. All of these show the work of tremendous artists and writers like Frank Miller, Alan Moore, David Mazzuchelli, Bill Sienkiewicz, Dave Gibbons, Dave McKean, Brian Bolland, Jerry Bingham, Mike W. Barr, Dennis O'Neil and many, many, many others. Unfortunately, among these is not included Grant Morrison and his *Arkham Asylum* which, after reading your great article on him, I will try my hardest to get.

I would like to see in every article you publish - the pictures of the persons you are referring to, their bibliography and samples (comic book covers) of their latest works.

Jairo Paez
Bogota. Colombia

We publish photos of interviewees when they're available (which is, surprisingly, seldom).

...Thank you for touching upon the subject of the prices of comic books. I have gone to a certain (dare I say, snobby) comic shop for many years now. The prices keep on growing and I can't handle it anymore. My weekly habit is $12. Calculate that times 52 weeks per year (you do it—I just don't want to know), plus supplies, and you have got a major problem.

Is it the comic book companies' fault? Maybe, for they add more advertisements year after year in comics (four pages of ads next to each other and two of them the same one?!? Marvel, get a life). They also raise the prices year after year. But besides that, the independent comic companies charge more for a black and white comic (I don't buy them for that reason).

Is it the readers' fault? Not really, they never stop buying the comics (there is always a demand for it). Is it an ecological problem? It is another possibility (why don't you ecological companies start printing on recycled paper?). But whose fault is it? I don't know, but it has to stop.

I don't buy comics that are more than $2, but that still does not stop me from spending a lot. I think it's time something was done. There are many ways to cut prices that can be explored (reduce size of comic, publish on cheaper paper, accept more ads, there are plenty of ideas).

I can't reduce how many comic books I buy (try parting with something you have been used to for a long time), nor can I stop buying them altogether. But I can tell you one thing: The buck must stop here!

Four dollars for *COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR!!?* C'mon!

Shaw Izikson
Address Withheld

...It has been quite a while since my first letter to you. Almost eight years. That letter was printed in issue #11, the last issue of the first series. So, unfortunately, I had no way to thank you. You see, printing that letter had unimaginable consequences for me. I had made a plea for pen-pals in that letter. Well, not one, not two, but 128 people wrote to me from all over the planet, from Sweden to Nigeria to South Africa, from India to Europe to (naturally) the United States!

Unfortunately, I had to discontinue my correspondence back then. I apologize for that and I would like to invite anyone who might read this letter to drop me a line. I would be more than delighted to hear from you again.

I'd like to comment on your magazine now. Sure, it's a magnificently majestic mag! I love all those articles on comics of the past, comics that I'll probably never be able to read. And since revivals of Golden and Silver oldies seem to be very trendy now, your articles are even more interesting. Still, in the few latest issues something is missing. Maybe it's the diversity of columns. I liked Howard Cruse's column and those controversial articles and columns you had in the first series, but I haven't seen something similar lately. How about Disney's comics, or Archie's or histories of all those comics from the '30s and '40s that few people know much about? Sure, I know that with the influx of new titles and movies every month, you'd need hundreds of pages to cover them all. But, I wouldn't like to see COMICS SCENE be like a *TV Guide* type of magazine.

I hope I won't have to wait 'til 1998 to write my next letter to you.

Dennis Tzavaras
32 Favierou Street,
GR-104 38
Athens, Greece

...How nice it was to see the world's greatest superhero back in the spotlight, in COMICS SCENE #11! Now, I count myself a big Batman booster, but I have been dismayed at the lack of attention given to Superman during the recent hullabalioo surrounding the Dark Knight. Trevor Aikman had it right in this issue's Lettering. The current storylines in the three Supes titles deserve the attention of fandom. Roger Stern, Jerry Ordway, George Perez, Kerry Gammill, Dan Jurgens, Brett Breeding and the other members of the 'Super-crew' are producing the kind of material Superman fans have been screaming for for years. There is characterization, a large and diverse supporting cast, strong continuity, character interaction and the traditional action and adventure. For us oldsters, there is the fascinating retelling of events from the Kryptonian's past 50 years, done the way we always wanted them done, without the silly contradictions and thoughtless mistakes accumulated through the '50s and '60s. Superman is the greatest character in comics at this point,

and it hurts that sales are, according to reliable sources, slipping alarmingly. Thank you, COMICS SCENE, for bringing Superman into the public eye again. Let's have more coverage of the first and the best!

Also of great interest in this issue was the chat with Joe Kubert. I learned things in Robert Hambrecht's piece that I hadn't known, and that doesn't happen very often. Kubert came across as a perfect gentleman and, in case he might be reading this, I would like to urge him to pick up his pencil more often. DC could only benefit from more Kubert covers, if not stories!

Dale Coe
56 Whitecross Road
Warrington
Cheshire, WA5 1LR
England

...There are a few of us who didn't care for *Batman* at all. I thought it was grossly overrated. And a very dark film.

The scene where Jack Nicholson fell into the vat of chemicals after being shot in the face, I mean, come on, who would be able to survive a bath of chemical acids?

I'm getting tired of all this bat crap. When are they going to stop cramming Batman down our throats? *Or* our wallets for that matter!

Susan D. Peterson
4631 Ripley
Davenport, IO 52806

The plethora of bat-products will continue as long as the demand (and mania) is there. Don't blame the merchandisers (who license in the hopes of making money), but the fans who horde and attack every new bat-novelty, buying multiple copies of everything, some in the hopes they will become collectors items, thus creating the marketplace. Remember, nobody forces anyone to buy this stuff. Look at all those Howard the Duck slippers that collected dust on the shelves.

...*"When was the last time you saw a comic-book movie that was about something?"* asks Albert Pyun in CS #12. Well, assuming he means a story not dealing with the origins or personality of the adapted character alone, there was *Superman III* & *IV*, about computers and nukes, respectively, and the old *Spider-Man* TV shows, which usually were about mind control or hijacks. But still I hope that Captain America's new movie is not as bad as those and does not bomb.

Thank you so much for printing an article on the new Hulk movie. I am a great fan of Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno and as the other Hulk movies have never been shown on TV here, you are my only link. I hope that if/when the Hulk returns, he will be smarter. The TV version is getting too repetitive. Also, the makeup seems less effective than in the days of the regular movies. I would love to see the Banner/Hulk transformation sequence done using 1990's technology. It's also about time Jack McGee found out the truth about the Hulk and the world knew that Banner was alive. This could prove to be very interesting. I only hope they screen it in Britain, too!

Faiz Rehman
Costa Plenta
Scwrfa Road
Tredegar
Gwent.
NP2-4EL

...A few years ago, when you first started, your first two issues were dynamite. A great mix of stories that I found quite enjoyable, but starting with issue #3, the stories seemed more lackluster to me. I realize the magazine is titled COMICS SCENE but I hoped for more TV and movie animation articles. Now with the past three issues, I'm glad to see a broader base of stories. How about a piece where a critic reviews the best and worst of animation series that are on the airways right now?

James Smith III
1615 Main
Williston, ND 58801

...I would like to comment on the article in issue #13 about the Guardians of the Galaxy. I've been a fan for a long time and I always felt they had more potential than was being displayed. I've read the first issue and it looks very good. The only comment I have to make is on the listing of immortal or near-immortal characters who will guest star. The ones listed sound good, but how can the Guardians run around the galaxy and not meet two of Marvel's biggest immortals—namely Thor and Hercules?

The Guardians have already met Thor and the new book seems similar to the recent Hercules mini-series, so I think it would be natural for him to appear.

Secondly, I'd like to reply to Willie Holmes' letter asking why people voted for Robin's death without resorting to name-calling. I think there are a few reasons. First, the character had outlived his time. Sidekicks, be they kids or teens or animals or funny adults were mostly created in the '30s and '40s when comics were more tongue-in-cheek. With the more serious comics today, sidekicks should remain obsolete. Marvel wisely left Bucky dead when they revived Captain America.

A massive dose of gamma radiation transforms mild-mannered Fred Flintstone into the Incredible Homer Simpson.

Art: Jeff Langcaon

Another reason is that it detracts from the realism of the story. I mean, do you honestly believe a 10 to 14-year-old kid can constantly take out an opponent who is twice his size and weight? It is also unbelievable that someone so obsessed by an event in their childhood would expose such a young child to extreme danger. Batman is compelled to live in a dark, grim world with little hope of happiness or a normal life. After telling Dick Grayson to take a hike, I found it unlikely that Batman would take on another kid partner so easily.

Lastly and most importantly to me, is the fact that Batman *should* remain alone. The best stories have always been those in which Robin had little or no part. As an example, take a look at the stories done after Dick Grayson was packed off to college. These keep more to the original dark menacing tales that created Batman.

To sum it all up, Robin was a ploy created to give young kids someone to identify with and for Batman to talk to. The time has long since passed when these situations were needed.

Lev Brault
Address Withheld

...Now that the *Batman* movie has come out, we're all starting to hear about all the comics-related projects that Hollywood is going to throw at us. Even after we get through *The Punisher*, *Captain America*, *Boris and Natasha* and *Dick Tracy*, we will still get more and more comics-related movies, some good, some bad. It's inevitable. When *Star Wars* came out, we saw a whole string of space-influenced movies. When *Friday the 13th* (or whatever) came out, a whole string of horror movies followed suit. We even saw a rise in adventure movies after Indy did his Ark gig. Now, it's comic-book characters. Hopefully, most of the movies will be a whole lot better than the aforementioned rip-offs.

Wolverine: Is it just me, or does Mel Gibson fit the part well? And how about Ricardo Montalban as Magneto?

Spider-Man: Peter Parker is the perfect role for Tom Cruise to play. And how about Robey to play Mary Jane? Focusing on the recent married Spider-Man would be the best bet. Throw in some worthy villains, like Doc Octopus and Hobgoblin or Green Goblin and Doctor Doom (especially Doom), instead of just thugs like the TV versions of Spidey and the Hulk fought. That's my biggest beef. If I were going to throw out a super-powered hero, why not a super-powered villain? The Joker was great, and (hopefully) so will the Red Skull, but having the amazing Spider-Man fighting Moe the Brainless Thug doesn't cut it.

William Byers
Kalkaska, MI

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Miller's Crossing

A Dark Knight no longer, Frank Miller now tries to look on the bright side.

By PHILIP NUTMAN

Frank has reached an interesting stage in his career as a writer," notes British artist Dave Gibbons. "Aside from being able to do whatever he wants, he's now exploring other forms of storytelling, like doing *RoboCop 2*, and I think his writing is becoming more audacious."

Having worked with award-winning writer/artist Frank Miller on *Give Me Liberty*, Dave Gibbons knows better than anyone just how much Miller's writing has matured in the more than three years since he stunned the business with *The Dark Knight Returns*.

"*Liberty* has been a very exciting book to work on. Dave and I came roaring off the attention we had gotten for *Watchmen* and *Dark Knight* and I think we were both feeling very full of ourselves, and so, I conceived an enormous project of hundreds and hundreds of pages which would appear as a series of weighty graphic novels which would be oh so serious and oh so political," Miller recalls. "Then, after a while, we ran out of steam and had to re-evaluate what we really wanted to do. I've never had a project come to such a halt, a project we had done so much work on. And it actually died for a couple of hours. Really, for two hours, it was *dead*. Then, it suddenly turned around on itself in a dramatic fashion the like of which I never imagined. What we were missing was joy, the joy of comics, the joy of the medium. Basically, we had got so full of ourselves we had forgotten what had brought us so much attention in the first place."

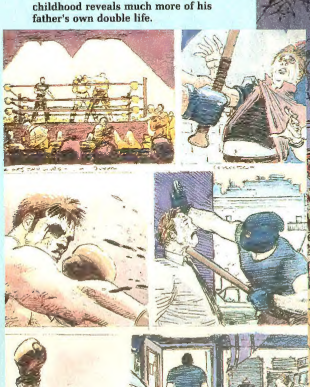
Miller acknowledges that for a while there was "an almost Stalinist pressure" on certain key creative individuals in the medium to produce work that was essentially political in nature. Instead, Miller and Gibbons decided to follow their hearts into adventure, producing a story that's filled with disturbing, kick-ass action yet underscored with a dark strand of political parody.

Only a heroine well versed in the ninja art of resurrection could survive years of death and reworking.

Art: Frank Miller/Colors: Lynn Varley

***Hard Boiled*, explains Miller, "is really a study in understatement in terms of words, overstatement in terms of artwork."**

A look back into Matt Murdock's childhood reveals much more of his father's own double life.



Art: John Romita, Jr.

"The politics in *Liberty* are, I feel, obviously blatant parody," he remarks. "It remains an adventure story whatever you want to read into the subtext. After the false start, it turned out to be a tremendous joy to work on. Dave and I are so much in tune that when I get the artwork back from him, I scarcely change a word, and I'm renowned for rewriting things I've drawn. As it gained momentum, it developed a level of absurdity I've wanted to put into comics for a long time. Most importantly, Dave worked out the visuals and I worked out the literary side of a character we both fell in love with," he enthuses, referring to Martha Washington, the story's protagonist. "I feel she's a wonderful character, and it's great to fall in love with a character you've created. But through all of this, we had the added pleasure of working with a small publisher [Dark Horse] with a whole different rights situation. And then to have it received so warmly..." He trails off for a moment, considering his words carefully.

"I had no idea how the 1990s' comics market would respond to this. Given what we've seen appear in the last year, I had no gauge whether or not I was in step or out of step with what people want to see. This was planned and executed so independently that it's basically the kind of project Dave and I *wanted* to do, without bowing to market pressures or editorial dictates."

Also from Dark Horse, *Give Me Liberty*'s publisher, is *Hard Boiled*, which he describes as a parody of the action-adventure genre in movies and comics. "It's the first time I've ever really done something where the accent was so much on comedy. Originally, it was a much more serious story, but when the art started coming in and I saw what amazing, absurdist material Geof Darrow was doing, such lunatic stuff with such great comic value, I realized my *true* role in this story was as the straight man. The series is really a study in understatement in terms of words, overstatement in terms of artwork. It's a really simple story told very, very lavishly, and that's part of the joke. I think it's working, but there's very little resemblance to what I originally intended.

"In comics," Miller explains, "you're collaborating with so few people, one maybe two, that when I write for somebody else, it's nothing like when I write for myself to draw. It's not a matter of 'Did they do what I said?' or not, it's a matter of how different personalities mix: What do we have in common, what do we have in conflict? Those two aspects make for exciting elements in a story. When I write for Dave, I'm aware I'm writing

All Elektra & Daredevil Art & Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group

Art: Frank Miller/Colors: Lynn Varley

"I can't really be objective," says Frank Miller of *Elektra Lives Again*, "but I think it's strong, really frightening."

embarrassment, "it was far blacker than I originally envisioned. I had just moved from New York after being there for 11 years," he explains, "and there are always some very deep wells of minable rage to exploit if you live there. But that's not an emotion I find myself pursuing as much these days."

Does this mean Frank Miller has become a mellow Californian? "Oh my God, I guess it's true!" he laughs again. Or is it a question of maturity, discovering life is too short to invest time in rage and anguish? "I hope it's the latter because I would never want to do really reassuring work, not that I think that anything I'm doing is. However, my attitude towards the Hero has changed so much I find more pleasure than ever before. Inner torment is a wonderful thing in fiction, but just for the sake of variety, it's nice to be beating a different drum for a while."

No one could describe *Give Me Liberty* as a reassuring piece of work, as Martha Washington is continually faced with horrific violence and corruption. *Hard Boiled*, regardless of its absurdity, may be the most violent comic book currently available. As for inner torment, well, Miller certainly hasn't given up on that theme, as displayed in his new graphic novel, *Elektra Lives Again!*

Described as a "psychological horror story," the new work opens with

***Elektra Lives Again*, and apparently, she's not the only one.**

SOME OF THEM WOBBLE ON BLOODLESS STUMPS
SOME CRAWL ON THEIR BELLIES
DRAGGING THEIR ENTRAILS
SOME CURSE HER
SOME LAUGH
THE ONES WITH LEGS ARE FASTER
THE REST HAVE LEARNED TO BE PATIENT
SO MANY
GO ON...
GRAND MARQUIS OF THE SEVEN HELLS OF ASTAROTH
HE'S THE BEST KNIFE

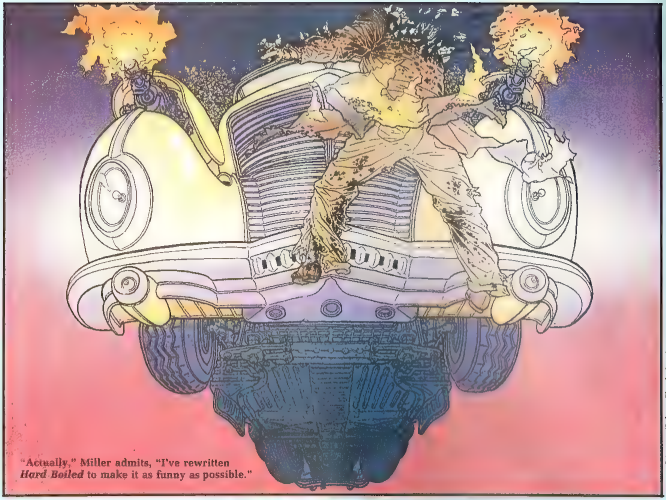
Art: Frank Miller/Colors: Lynn Varley

Hard Boiled Art & Characters Trademark & Copyright 1990 Frank Miller & Geof Darrow Art: Geof Darrow/Colors: Claude Legris

for someone who can take as complicated an idea as I can imagine and make it simple and open and orderly. Working with Geof, I realized that I can come up with something where I would take it to the stage where it would be a very exciting action scene, and he will take it so far over the top that the absurdity of the genre is just screaming at you. Actually, I've rewritten *Hard Boiled* to make it as funny as possible."

It sounds like after nearly a decade of dark, brooding seriousness, Miller has crossed a line into what to him is previously uncharted territory. He had already taken martial arts, which had been chronicled in a frequently juvenile fashion in the '70s, and treated the subject with reverence first in *Daredevil* and then in *Ronin*, incorporating the way of the Samurai into a post-hi-tech landscape. There was obviously a very serious sensibility at work behind the action scenes and science fiction elements, though, of course, what typifies Miller's work is *The Dark Knight Returns*, his ground-breaking dissection of Batman's troubled psyche. That seemed as dark as one could get with a superhero, and Miller agrees, pleased to note there has been a change in his tone.

"I hope there's a levity in my current work, a levity that isn't flippant. At least, that's what it feels like to me. *Dark Knight*, in its own way, was such a product of rage that even though I found it awfully funny in many places," he laughs with nervous

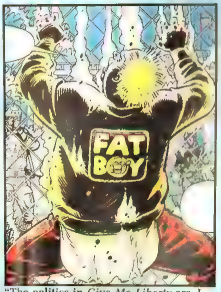


"Actually," Miller admits, "I've rewritten *Hard Boiled* to make it as funny as possible."

Art: Geof Darrow/Colors: Claudio Legris

Matt Murdock still grieving over the loss of his beloved Elektra, unable to come to terms with either her death or her apparent rebirth, and gets progressively darker.

"It's going to be great to have that one out as I've been working on it for so long. To have it as a finished entity will be a great pleasure. Lynn's [Varley, colorist and Miller's wife] work on it is extraordinary. In many ways, it's a product of us doing hundreds and hundreds of pages together, learning how to work in tune so my line work is actually deliberately incomplete. The wedding of the paint and the line is much stronger than any work we've done before. At the moment, we're just doing the last-minute changes, little things, so I can't really be objective, but I think it's strong, really frightening."



"The politics in *Give Me Liberty* are, I feel, obviously blatant parody," comments Miller.

Although it seemed like Miller had disappeared off the face of the Earth after *Dark Knight*, he has actually been busier than ever before. In addition to the three comic book projects which have emerged since this summer (with still another, a graphic novel about Matt Murdock's youth, drawn by John Romita jr. on the way), there was, of course, his screenplay for *RoboCop 2* (on which he shared credit with Walon Green). The first time Miller had worked professionally in the movie business, the process was both exciting and frustrating. It was also time-consuming and entailed him having to spend months on location in Texas as the script was written and repeatedly rewritten.

"Unlike comics, moviemaking is so collaborative, and a writer has so little control," Miller says. "I believe I was given much more influence over the film than a writer usually has, but it was a shock to me coming from a medium where I have almost total autonomy. It was a matter of trying to hold something together against the overwhelming influence of chaos."

Despite this, Miller found the experience to be educational. "There's a transformation that takes place on set when the written word is translated into reality that's quite startling. There is nothing more intimate in a movie, nothing so powerful as a close-up of an actor," he explains. "But the script had some problems with character and action which required me to make the narrative more linear to bring those emotions out and make it work for the actors.

"The main problem was its basic intent," he explains. "The script had undergone many, many changes by the time we arrived in Houston. I felt it was immensely confused; it didn't know what kind of movie it wanted to be. [Director] Irvin Kershner and I worked very, very intensely to work out the focus, and it was a struggle to define what the story was about. But

(continued on page 24)

Art: Dave Gibbons/Courtesy Dark Horse Liberty Art & Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Frank Miller & Dave Gibbons

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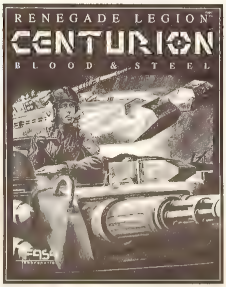

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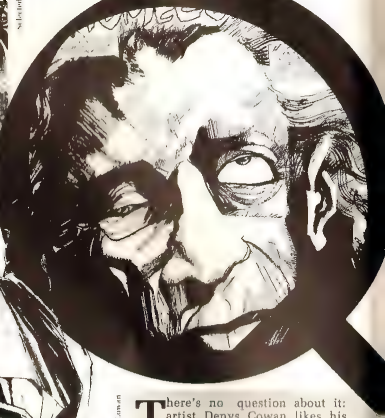
Selected Original Art Courtesy Denys Cowan

"I'm not into traditional superheroes," says Cowan, "so the Question is an ideal character for me."

Having already worked on the last two issues of the *Deathlok* mini-series, Cowan looks forward to the monthly book.

Pencilled and inked by Denys Cowan, *The Question Quarterly* is being drawn with "extra, extra care."



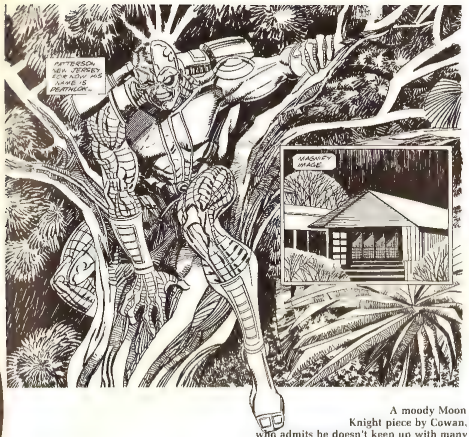
"When I do covers, I always consider it a privilege," says the artist. "It means I can sell books."

All Art Denys Cowan

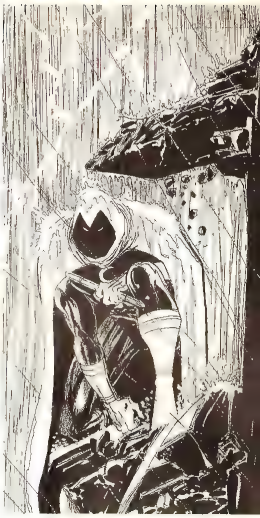
There's no question about it: artist Denys Cowan likes his job. "It's what I've always wanted to do, ever since I was five years old," Cowan smiles. "When I was younger, I would always say I wanted to be a doctor or a fireman, but all that time, I was drawing. So, it finally occurred to me: 'Why don't I do *this* for a living?' "

Still, the current artist of *The Question Quarterly* and an upcoming DC Prestige mini-series admits that as much as he enjoys his job, "it's not as 'fun' as I thought it would be, because after all, it *is* a job. Part of the appeal of doing comics when you're younger is that you get to draw all this cool stuff—you get to draw Superman in his cape, or Batman on a rooftop with the Moon behind him. But the reality of comics is a lot different than that.

"You end up drawing many things



A moody Moon Knight piece by Cowan, who admits he doesn't keep up with many of the comics out today.



uestion Marks

While he illuminates his faceless hero's adventures, Denys Cowan ponders other issues.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

that you don't have *any* interest in drawing whatsoever, like crowd scenes at Grand Central Station, for pages and pages!"

In addition to stories, Cowan is doing an increasing number of covers, which requires a different approach to his art.

"My job is to sell the book. When I do covers, I always consider it a privilege, especially with books I didn't do, which I'm doing more and more of," he explains. "In the eyes of the editor and the company that I'm working for, it means I can sell books, and in the end, that's our job."

The book he has been most closely associated with in recent years doesn't feature any mainstream characters, which is why he loves working on the new *Question Quarterly*.

"That's the reason I really enjoy it. I'm not into traditional superheroes as such. When I was a kid, I was into Superman, Batman, Captain America and so forth, but now, I've found my interest is *outside* of the traditional superhero genre. So, the Question is an ideal character for me. It was ideal when I first accepted it, and it's ideal now. I really like it."

Question writer Denny O'Neil, who revived the title for DC nearly four years ago, has worked with Cowan throughout the current incarnation of the character, who was originally created for Charlton Comics by Steve Ditko in the '60s. The nature of the O'Neil-Cowan collaboration has changed, however.

"That first year of *The Question*, we plotted very closely. In the second year of *The Question*, we drifted further and further apart, to where I would only suggest things every so often. Most of the stories during the second year of *The Question* were generated by Denny and Mike Gold. The third year of *The Question*, I had almost no involvement with the stories other than drawing them. I still enjoyed it just as much, it was still cool," he explains, but notes that the quarterly revival of the comic has allowed him to concentrate much more on his artwork.

"*The Question Quarterly* is a whole different experience. I'm really enjoying it. I'm pencilling and inking it. I always wanted to do that with *The Question*, but the time factor was the major stumbling block in that. Now, I have a lot of time with the quarterlies, so I'm taking extra, extra care," he says. "I always wanted to ink my own work. I always feel that pencillers are their own best inkers, and that's true in my case."

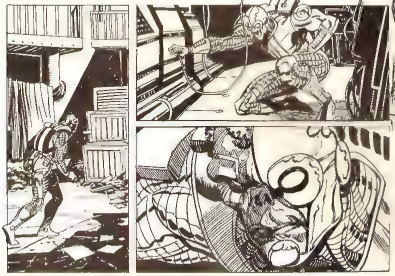
In addition to O'Neil, Cowan has also worked with screenwriter Sam Hamm on a three-part Batman story in *Detective Comics* #598-600.

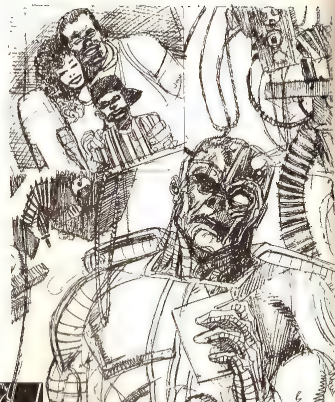
1990 DC Comics Inc.

UNCLE VIC WANNA GO HOME
HIGH AS HE'LL GO IT HAS TO AS FAR AS I GO
SHE KNOWS TOO AND THIS DOESN'T WANT TO DIE HERE IN A TINY VILLAGE AT THE END OF THE AMAZON RAIN FOREST...
EARLIER THAN DONE HE HAS LOST THEN KEITH ARGUEN DOLLMAN AND TUSHER TUCHMAN OF MUCH FROM HIS LIFE

Although he enjoys his job, Cowan admits "it's not as 'fun' as I thought."

While, in a way, the new Deathlok is a black hero, Cowan wants to do more to erase stereotypical views.





A cyborg in pencil from the last issue of the mini-series.

"I thought you were a Jewish woman," said more than one fan to Cowan, whose real identity was lesser known than the characters he drew until recently.

"Sam's a great guy to work with, a great writer. His scripts are really concise, and I didn't feel like I had to do that much work," he jokes. "Sam's really good, and I respect him a lot. It was a pleasure working with him.

"Gee, I haven't said anything controversial yet!" he laughs.

Past influences on his art were rather typical, the artist admits.

"I have the same influences that everyone else had. I was really into John Buscema, and Joe Kubert was one of my heroes. Milt Caniff, Hal Foster and guys like that—I was really into traditional comics."

Asked to determine whether he has noticed artists today that *he* may have influenced, Cowan is more hesitant to respond.

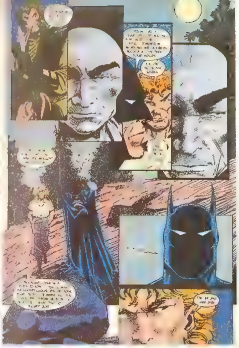
"I can't really answer that. I have no idea. Sometimes guys will show me something that they think has been influenced by me, and then I'll go, 'Yeah! Bastard ripped me off!' " he chuckles. "Naw, comics are very incestuous that way. We're all influenced by one another to a certain extent. They see things in my work that they think they can apply to their work; or things they think are especially cool and they want to appropriate it, then that's cool. That's what I did."

Cowan virtually grew up with comics, reading them when he was younger, and going to work at an unusually early age.

"I started out as a kid drawing comics. I was 15 when I got in the industry," he explains. "I worked for Rich Buckler when I was about 15, and I worked for Arvell Jones, and I worked with Keith Pollard, though Keith never let me touch anything of his. Then, I went to work for Neal Adams when I was about 17, and I worked at Continuity [Adams' company] for about three years.

"When I was 17, I got my first professional job on my own. It was a little horror story—I don't even remember who wrote it, but Paul Levitz was the editor. I did these pages and worked really hard on them, and he told me that they *still* weren't good enough!"

Cowan has never lost his fondness for comics. "I'll always love the art form," he says. "I'm just as involved now as I was then. The realities of the business have sobered me up to the



Art: Denys Cowan/Rick Magyar/Colors: Tatiana Wood

Original Unused Cover Sketch: Denys Cowan

Art: Denys Cowan/Malcolm Jones III

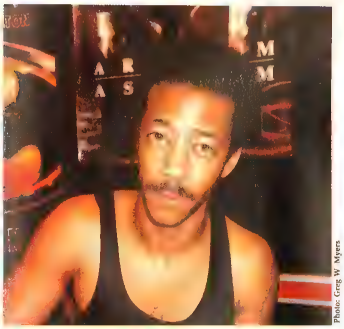


Photo: Greg W. Myers

"Sam Hamm is a great guy," says Cowan, who got a chance to work with the screenwriter on a three-part Batman story in *Detective Comics*.

business of the art, but I'm more involved now. I love what I do."

In addition to his art, Cowan says he is expanding in the direction of writing, or at least plotting stories.

"I'm working on a Green Arrow story for Mike Gold right now. I work in collaboration with my friend [comics writer] Jim Owsley on several different projects. He's doing the words, he's writing it—he's the brains behind it, I guess—and I'm helping out whenever I can."

What he feels may be his greatest accomplishment, which is upcoming, is such a collaboration with Owsley.

"It's a new Prestige Format title for DC called *The Spook*. It's the work I'm proudest of. I'm pencilling, inking, co-plotting and painting the covers. It's an 'urban nightmare,' "

Despite fan interest, Cowan is least enthusiastic about some of his earliest work.

"I'm not very proud of the *Power Man and Iron Fist* stuff. Many fans are really into it, and I get constantly reminded of how horribly I think I drew back then when people ask me to sign this stuff. I was really young, about 19, and I was still developing," says the 30-year-old artist.

Cowan has done his time in the industry, but claims that he seldom keeps up with comics nowadays.

"Very rarely. There are a few comics that I'll follow—anything that Walt Simonson writes. I like his *Fantastic Four*. As far as other comics, nahhh. To be honest, I really end up reading the stuff I like over and over again."

The biggest problem Cowan has with the comics medium is one that affects him most directly.

"My main gripe is the stereotypical treatment of blacks in comics," he notes. "It didn't start with *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire*, though that's the most glaring example of this stereotypical point-of-view that comics tend to explore in terms of blacks being treated in comics.

"They thought they were trying to be very hip, and unfortunately, it was all a part of that blaxploitation bandwagon in the '70s, and *Luke Cage* came out after it was over. So, they were stuck with this stereotypical treatment of a black character," he says, pointing out that it's up to the blacks working in comics today to change things.

Another example of Cowan's cover work on an atypical hero from *Ms. Tree Quarterly* #2.

"Deathlok was the character that made me want to do comics when I was growing up," says Cowan.

Ms. Tree Character: Trademark & Copyright 1980 Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty

"I believe that in order for blacks and other minorities to be effectively portrayed in comics, they have to take control and do it themselves. That's one of the things that *The Spook* is about—it's a black book. Jim Owsley's black, I'm black, Michael Davis, who's going to color it, one of my best friends in the whole world, is black. We have to tell *our own* stories in our own ways, and no one's going to do it for us. We have to do it for ourselves. I don't see myself as a spearhead for this movement. Even if it is a movement, it's a necessity."

A white writer can write black characters, Cowan explains, but can't truly convey a black point-of-view.

"I think Denny O'Neil can write a black character as well as he can write any character. But in order to escape stereotypical points-of-view of black characters, black writers and artists have to portray themselves. Now, whether the stories are good or bad, at least it'll be from our point-of-view. As good of a writer as Denny is, as an example, he will *not* have a black point-of-view. He can write a black character, but no matter how hard he tries, he'll never come from our point-of-view. He just doesn't have that particular perspective. I can write about the experiences of an Irish Catholic writer working in New York, and *I* still won't have that point-of-view—I haven't lived that life. I don't really know. I can pretend.

"More people need to be aware of the role that black creators have contributed to comics. This is still an industry that's run by white business, so therefore, we don't get a lot of the representation that we should.

"Comics are a visual art form. It's not like acting, where we see the performers, we're basically in the background. Yet more and more, the media are being attracted to us, and black people need to see that there *are* black creators who are making a significant contribution to comics and have been for years."

The credits on a comic book story only list names, so any reader unfamiliar with the creators can't tell what color they are, which, to Cowan, is a mixed blessing.

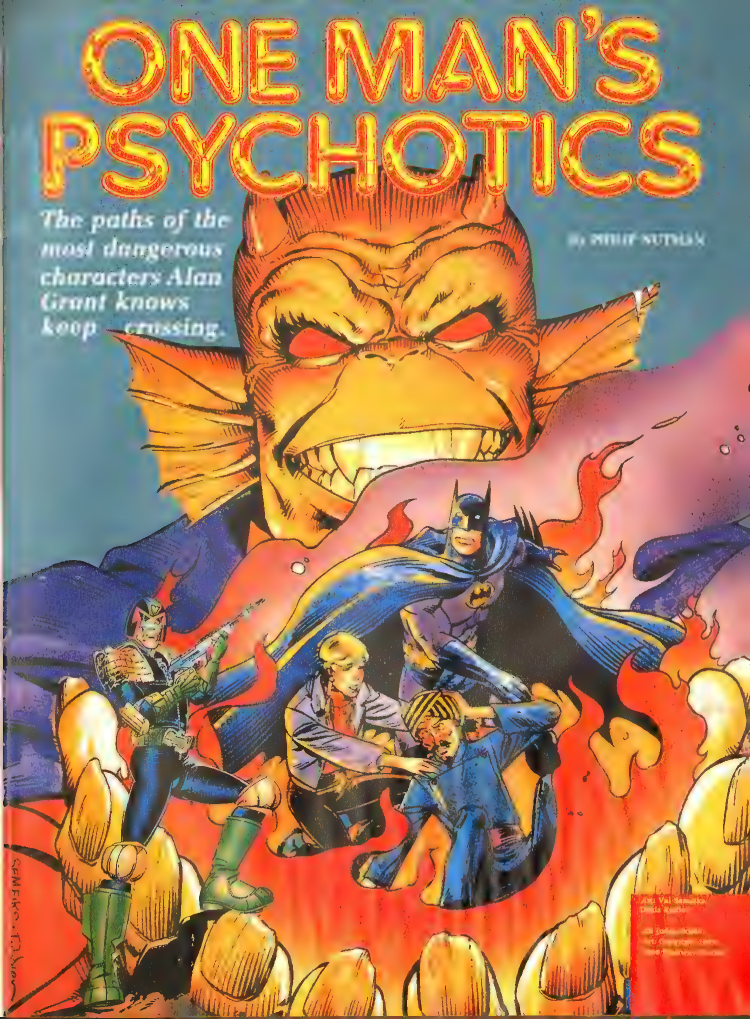
"That's good, but anytime, especially in the old days, that you did see a creator, it was always Jack Kirby sitting at a desk with a cigar, posing,

(continued on page 32)

ONE MAN'S PSYCHOTICS

The paths of the most dangerous characters Alan Grant knows keep crossing.

By BRIAN SUTTON



on the floor of my office at night and let my thoughts ramble; anything that occurs to me that might be good I jot down. Sometimes, one sentence is enough to give you a 24-page story. Then again, there are days when I get up with a knot in my stomach and I think, "This is it—you haven't got any ideas." [*Laughs.*] But when in doubt, think about your characters.

CS: Are you more comfortable with characters created by other writers or your own?

GRANT: Other people's. Although I've created several characters over the years, none of them have the iconographic power of, say, Batman or Judge Dredd, so I find working with characters like that very rewarding. Both Batman and Dredd are characters I relate to. The worlds they inhabit strike a chord with me.

CS: Do you find it difficult to come up with a new *Batman* story every month?

GRANT: I hate to say this in a way because *Batman* is the most important title I write, but I find it easier to write Batman than *any* other figure, probably because I like him so much. It's not hard because you don't have to make him the center of every story, he's more of a presence. To me, the stories are as much about Gotham City as they are about him. To my mind, the *one* great genius of the comics medium is Will Eisner. When he writes about the Spirit, his stories have resonance because he's telling stories about people. Although that's not stuff I grew up on, Eisner's work has greatly influenced my storytelling.

In *Batman*, Grant revealed the latest Robin, Tim Drake, as costumed by Neal Adams.

Art: Michael W. Mahnke

Last issue, British writer Alan Grant explained why he's currently one of the busiest and most successful scribes in the comic book business. Here, in the concluding part of the interview, the genial Scottish wordsmith gives COMICS SCENE the exclusive on the long-awaited Judge Dredd/Batman team-up and his numerous other future projects

COMICS SCENE: Do you write more for plot or for character?

ALAN GRANT: Characters rather than plot. I don't feel I'm the world's best writer when it comes to plotting. In comics, that's not a big disadvantage, you can write interesting stories that have rather weak plots. I've always been afraid to analyze how I do it in case I stop being *able* to do it. The way I work is I usually lay out

"Oh, the Demon's a fun character to write," admits Grant. "Who can resist someone created by Jack Kirby?"

Art: Val Semeiks, Mitch Byrd

Speaking about other people's characters, there are very few writers who can create more than one lasting character, and these few creators are the ones who pop up now and again with a new bunch of characters that keep the industry going for another five years or so. Jack Kirby is an extreme example; the number of characters that shot off from that guy's drawing board is amazing. Basically, Marvel is still running on characters he created 30 years ago. I don't see myself doing that. John Wagner and Pat Mills have that talent and that's probably why I'm more comfortable with writing previously-created characters. There's so much you can do with Batman or the Demon. Writing *Batman* is a real pleasure for me.

CS: How did you get the assignment to write the Batman/Judge Dredd project? Reportedly, Alan Moore was originally going to do it with Brian Bolland illustrating.

GRANT: When the idea was first mentioned, John Wagner and I were the Judge Dredd writers at the time. I understand that when whoever came up with the idea, *Batman*'s sales figures were flagging and DC was looking for a way to boost them back up. I was there when the managing editor of Fleetway phoned John up to offer him the job. Well, he turned it down because John has never been a big fan

Art: Val Semeiks/Dennis Rodier

Art: Norm Breyfogle

To Judge Dredd, the Dark Knight is just another "perp." Batman may have been better off facing his entire rogue's gallery than taking on the Judge.

of superheroes, American style, or American comics in general. I tried to change his mind, but Judge Dredd was his character, and in effect, he was the senior partner although the nature of our collaboration was 50-50, so I had to bow to his decision.

The next thing we heard, Alan and Brian had been approached to do it. I would have *loved* to see Alan do it because, next to Frank Miller, there's no other writer working in the medium I admire more, but I didn't think it was fair, him never having written a Dredd story, that he should be the one to write it. Well, I ran into Alan at a convention a few months later and he said, if I can remember correctly, that Fleetway had said John had given permission for him to write it. John had done no such thing. So, I told Alan we would be unhappy if anyone other than ourselves did it, which he accepted. I heard nothing more about it until a couple of years ago. I don't think Alan necessarily backed down because of what I said—

Jason attempts to control the Demon within, as he sets out to find himself.

Art: Collins & Farmer

That lovable Lobo will be riding into Etrigan's life for "some *very* nasty material."

I don't know what happened—but what he eventually did, of course, was *The Killing Joke*.

So, the project reared its head again back in 1988, I think with Alan Davis suggested as the artist. Although Alan has established himself as a Batman artist, and I like his work a lot, he isn't really a Dredd artist. But he was really busy with *Excalibur* and a number of other projects, and in the end, he decided not to do it.

The next person suggested—and the person we thought would be best—was Simon Bisley, who has done such a great job on the *Lobo* mini-series. He has the right psychotic edge to his art which is ideal for a project like that. No disrespect to Alan Davis—but that's *not* what Judge Dredd's about. Dredd's about a dirty, stinking nightmare of a city run by neo-fascist judges; it's not a clean story at all. But Simon has done a beautiful job. Even though the book's fully painted, there's a real psychopathic intensity there.

CS: How does Batman end up in Mega-City One?

GRANT: It's already set up in the Dredd universe that Mega-City's major foe, Judge Death, has access to Dimension Jump technology, which is how he got to Mega-City in the first place, and the way we've set it up is Judge Death [*laughs*]—hold on, I'll try and phrase this so it doesn't sound crazy—psionically influences Mean Machine Angel to steal the Dimension Belt technology from the University where the Mean Machine is on a training course for psychotics. Death then double-crosses Mean Machine and zips off on a dimensional journey and ends up in Gotham. Batman and Death have an encounter and Batman defeats him, but when he picks up the Dimension Belt, he inadvertently activates it and is propelled to Mega-City One. Once he's there, he's perceived as a vigilante because on arriving, he has a fight with Mean Machine Angel and is arrested by the Judges, of whom Dredd is very unsympathetic to Batman's case. Death and Mean Machine, meanwhile, are now both in Gotham City, and Dredd doesn't care. "They're no longer our problem," is his attitude. Of course, Batman's enraged about this, but there's very little he can do as he has been sentenced to 20 years in prison. The only other thing I'll reveal is once in Gotham, Death teams up with the Scarecrow. It's pretty wild. In many respects, I feel it's a return to a lighter touch in comics. It's very humorous and has the same sensibility about it as the *Lobo* series.

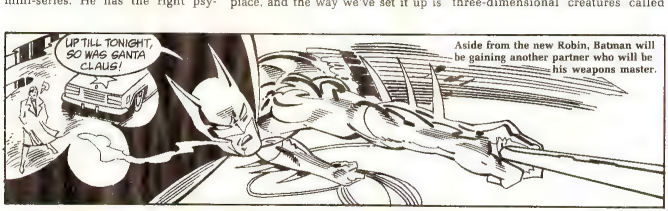
CS: *The Demon* seems to have been well received as an ongoing series.

GRANT: Oh, the Demon's a fun character to write. Who can resist someone created by Jack Kirby?

CS: What are your plans for the book?

GRANT: Well, in issue #7, as we've seen, Etrigan has been crowned King of Hell and has started to take his revenge on all those who've crossed him, particularly Merlin. But Merlin has one more trick up his sleeve and he operates the trick via Jason Blood. Once more, Etrigan is imprisoned in Jason and the two of them are sent back to Gotham City.

In issue #8, I introduce a character who has previously appeared in *Detective Comics* #601-603, Tenzen Wyatt, who has the ancient Tibetan power of being able to manifest solid, three-dimensional creatures called



Aside from the new Robin, Batman will be gaining another partner who will be his weapons master.

Topars using nothing more than the power of his mind. Wyatt is currently in Arkham Asylum having been driven mad during his last encounter with the Demon. He is hellbent on revenge and will feature heavily in the next few issues.

Meanwhile, Jason has turned his back on his friends. He discusses his motives with Batman and reveals he's leaving Gotham to journey to the East to discover himself. The trick Merlin employed in Hell involved opening up Jason's memories prior to when Etrigan became his prisoner, which he has never known before, and this has given him a new *raison d'etre*. Jason wants to find out what he was like, who he is if you strip away the Demon. Issue #8 ends with Jason leaving Gotham.

In issue #9, he has traveled to Tibet where, after some tribulations, he finds himself accepted into a monastery run by the Doomsday Sect of the Green Dragon Society. This actually starts a new six-part storyline called "Apocalypse Now." Unknown to Jason, the Green Dragons are followers of a now-dead guru who made certain prophecies concerning the fate of humanity. Mankind has been so wicked, it's now time to destroy and cleanse the Earth, as many religions believe. Jason becomes an unwitting pawn in all this. The guest star in issues #9 and #10 is the Phantom Stranger, who will warn Jason about the heavy shit he's getting involved with, and when Jason refuses to accept the Phantom Stranger's counseling, the Stranger does his best to appeal to Etrigan, which is obviously hopeless.

Meanwhile, in Gotham City, Klarion the Witch Boy has taken over Jason's empty apartment, where he tricks Harry Andrews into helping him. Klarion's motive is still to get rid of Etrigan. Also in issue #9, we'll get to see some of Jason Blood's secret origin, who he was *before* the Demon intervened, and we'll get to understand more about Klarion—who he is, where he's from, and what led to him being the wicked bastard he is.

Issue #11 will show Klarion and Harry getting together a gang of people who want revenge on Jason and Etrigan. Tenzen Wyatt will join, and Klarion will also resurrect another villain from *Detective Comics*, issue #616, a character called C'th, who, from what little we know of him, was a god king on Earth 10,000 years ago before his evil led to him being negated.

But the Dragon Society have succeeded in summoning the Destroyer, the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse, the pale rider whose name is Death, whose job it is to destroy the world, and at that issue's end, we'll discover it's actually Lobo. Now, if you think this is a commercial decision to cash in on the success of the *Lobo* mini-series, well, I have to say *yes*, but he does rather fit in well with what I had planned.

AND NOW MY CHRISTMAS IS COMPLETE!
HOOHOHOHOHOHA
Art: Rich Larson
All Batman, Demon & Lobo Art & Characters, Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics, Inc.
Art: Norm Breyfogle/Steve Mitchell

Instead of the overused Joker, Judge Death will employ the Scarecrow in his battle with Batman and Judge Dredd.

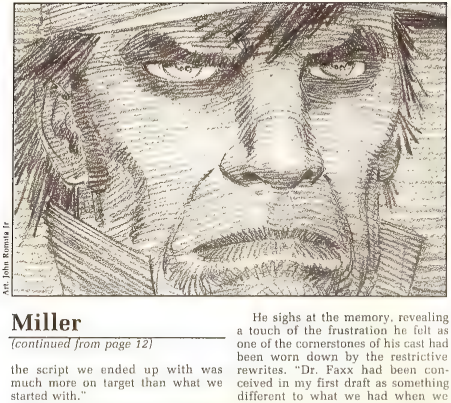
Issue #12 will have Lobo and Etrigan in conflict, and because it features Lobo, Simon Bisley will be painting the cover. I won't go into any more details, but Etrigan and Lobo team up and I have some *very* nasty material in store, which will send us full tilt towards the conclusion in issue #14. So, who knows? Maybe the world as we know it will end.

CS: *The Last American* is another project you've worked on with John Wagner. Why did it take almost three years to come out from Epic?

GRANT: Actually, it has been around in various stages of development for nearly *six* years. What happened was, Mike McMahon, the artist, caught flu. Kevin O'Neil, who was also working on the project, caught flu. In a week, Kevin was better, but Mike wasn't. His illness dragged on for nearly four years and he just wasn't able to draw. That's why it has taken so long. Mike suggested we get another artist because he knew he wasn't going to be able to complete it.

CS: Was it originally pitched to Epic? Or did it start off as a British deal that turned transatlantic?

(continued on page 60)



Art: John Romita Jr

In Frank Miller and John Romita Jr.'s upcoming graphic novel, a young Stick watches an even younger Daredevil begin to emerge.

Miller

(continued from page 12)

the script we ended up with was much more on target than what we started with."

Part of the problem was the dramatic imbalance between the villains, specifically what had happened to Dr. Faxx (Belinda Bauer), Miller's favorite character.

He sighs at the memory, revealing a touch of the frustration he felt as one of the cornerstones of his cast had been worn down by the restrictive rewrites. "Dr. Faxx had been conceived in my first draft as something different to what we had when we went on location. Over a number of drafts, she had been reduced from what I felt was a novel character to little more than a cliché. But on set, things started to click. We kept Belinda for an extra week and worked her hard and I came up with a number of scenes to reconstitute the character. That was probably the most gratifying part of the process for me, seeing Faxx come back to life. In the first draft, she was the main villain."

If Frank Miller cannot be objective about the movie as a whole, here he displays unbridled enthusiasm. "I'm happiest when Faxx is on screen. And the various comedic bits. The part where the board members sit around discussing what kind of mind RoboCop should have, and we see that played out to its logical result. There are other things, like his entrance with the flaming car wreck. I think it's a terrific entrance. But generally, it's the interplay between Faxx and RoboCop that excites me the most."

The reason for this is the theme of free will. For Miller, the dilemma that stimulates him most in storytelling is that question, and as satirical as the character of Faxx is, he feels she was a perfect opportunity for him to poke fun at very insidious forms of censorship. "There is a great deal of mind control which is coming from the liberal rather than conservative camp. It's very easy to do the usual corporate villains, dyed-in-the-wool Reaganites. It's a very easy target; it happens to be a very accurate target, but it has been done to death. I have a basic reflex action that when I see a sacred cow I shoot, and having had a few run-ins with censors, discovering that most of them declare themselves liberal, I found a whole new area for satire, a vein that hadn't been tapped."

There is no doubt, in the overall scheme of *RoboCop 2*, that Dr. Faxx poses a far greater threat to our metallic hero, but does Miller, therefore, see Cain as a lesser villain? "Perhaps," he says, pausing to choose his words carefully. "I think we did go to Texas with a confusion about the part. In a way, he comes across as a far more traditional villain than he could have been." Again, Miller pauses, adding, "But this is really difficult for me to gauge." With the initial drafts of the script focusing on Dr. Faxx, Cain's character was more of a victim than he is in the final movie. "He was an out-and-out raving psychotic," Miller assesses, "used as a tool and then planted into the robot so it had a violent reaction to everything. Basically, he was a much simpler character."

Due to the success of his first script, Orion Pictures contracted Miller to write the first draft of *RoboCop 3* even before the sequel hit theaters, but he is tight-lipped concerning the subject. "For obvious reasons, I can't discuss it," he stresses. "And one of those reasons is at present, I'm no longer involved with the project. There's a question concerning my future involvement, so let's just leave it at that."

The Monster Squad's Fred Dekker will direct the sequel, scheduled to begin shooting this month. The script's credited to both Miller and Dekker.

Beyond his Robo involvement, Miller has written his first original screenplay, which is currently being considered by a number of companies, but again he refuses to discuss details. "This is Hollywood—who knows what will happen? I really don't like talking about things if they're not concrete, and nothing is concrete in this town. All I'll say is the script is quite different from anything else I've written."

For Frank Miller, 1990 has turned out to be quite a year. "It has been interesting," he notes with understatement. "But what excites me the most is having the comics out there. *Give Me Liberty* turned out to be one of the most enjoyable projects I've ever worked on, and the fact that all this new material is being so well-received is deeply gratifying."

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MUTANT EXPERIENCES

After 16-odd years writing their exploits, Chris Claremont reconsiders "The Uncanny X-Men."

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

I can safely say that, by this time next year, the Marvel mutant universe will bear *no relation* to what it is today," says *X-Men* writer Chris Claremont. "None of the three core books will be the same—not *New Mutants*, not *X-Factor*, not *X-Men*."

Claremont has been writing the adventures of the senior title in that trio for more than 16 years—one of the longest continuous assignments in modern comics. He admits that, in many minds, it's no longer the prestigious task it once was. "It has become very fashionable in the last few years to denigrate *X-Men* and the *X-Men* canon. 'Ahhh, it's the *X-Men*, who cares if it sells 400,000 or a half-million copies a month? It's not what it used to be—the book is lame, the characters are lame, people only read the book out of habit.' We've all basically come to the conclusion that that's an attitude which will change real fast. There's a reason the *X-Men* has been the bestselling mainstream comic book in the United States for the better part of 10 years, and we're going to remind people of what it is. This is a series that, in many respects, is still cutting edge."

But even as he prepares to prove that he's still breaking new ground in comics, Claremont is cutting back his monthly workload, dropping all his regular assignments except for *X-Men*. "No, Chris Claremont didn't get burned out," he laughs. "That one monthly book is deceptive—it's actually 15 issues a year. I'm still doing some *Excalibur* regular issues for [editor] Terry Kavanagh, I have between six and a dozen special projects in various stages of creation—

All X-Men & Related Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1980 Marvel Entertainment Group

Excalibur, *X-Men*, *Wolverine*, a *She-Hulk* special edition I'm doing for Bobbi Chase. I've got a novel [*Grounded*, the sequel to his previous book, *First Flight*] I'm in the last stages of it for Ace Books, and another due to begin right after that. I hardly think burned out is the case. It's a matter of orienting away from the standard monthly series toward projects that give me a little more variety, a little more opportunity to approach stories and means of production—look, style—that you don't normally get in a monthly book. You can't do a *Meltdown*-type story in a regular run of *X-Men*, *Excalibur* or *Wolverine* or whatever. Those are some of the things I wanted to explore."

One of the most recent titles Claremont has stopped writing regularly is *Excalibur*, the adventures of Marvel's British-based mutant team. Many fans were surprised by that move, since Claremont had often said those characters were among his favorites. "Dropping *Excalibur* was jointly arrived at by me and the editor," Claremont explains. "I had a lot of other projects I wanted to pursue—I had my novel to finish, I had upwards of a half-dozen *Excalibur* special editions waiting for me. The book, frankly, wasn't as much fun without [artist] Alan Davis. Something had to give—and *X-Men* wasn't going to be it. So, I decided to step back from the regular run of *Excalibur* and let somebody else handle that. I'll do the special editions which, if I can get them all out, will probably give me more work in a year's time than the regular run.

"I dropped *Wolverine* out of sheer time pressure," he continues. "*X-Men*, *Excalibur* and *Wolverine* amounted to 45 issues a year plus other projects. There simply *wasn't* enough time in the day," the writer says.

But Claremont was never enthusiastic about a solo series for Logan. "I had been opposed to the concept of a *Wolverine* series from the start," he recalls. "I think it's a mistake. The company and the character would have been better served by doing a *Wolverine* limited series every year. That way you limit the risk of blatantly over-exposing and weakening the character. You should always leave the reader wanting more, but the prevalent attitude at all the companies is to give the readers all they want until the balloon pops and then back off. 'How many *Superman* can we do? How many *Spider-Man*? How many *Punisher*? *Wolverine*? *ALIENS*?' There's a tremendous pressure on the creators to produce product; the problem is getting management to understand that thinking of this purely as product—in the same sense that you think of Big Macs as product—has serious drawbacks. On the other hand, it's very hard to argue with consistent sales in the 300-400,000 range. 'Why should we not do this book when every year we sell four million copies of it? This is *not* a failure.' "

The sheer number of characters that Claremont has to deal with on *X-Men* keeps the writer from losing interest.

Although they allow Cable, Storm and Cyclops to lead massive team-ups, the multi-title crossovers are not something Chris Claremont relishes.

As for *The Uncanny X-Men*, 16 years is a long time to write about anything, let alone a set of costumed mutants. How does Claremont keep it fresh for himself after all this time? "First of all, you're talking about upwards of 20 main characters, so it's a cast of extraordinary depth and breadth," he points out. "Then, you add in the supporting cast, the villains—there's a huge mix of people to play with and to draw from. Part of the technique is, if one set of people gets stale, you change the line-up a little.

"By the same token, each change of the creative team, whether it's a new editor or a new penciller, also brings a dynamic change in the book itself," the writer goes on. "How Bob Harras approaches *X-Men* is different from how Ann Nocenti did it, which is different from how Louise Jones [Simonson] did it, which is different from how Jim Salicrup and Roger Stern did it. By the same token, Dave Cockrum's version of the *X-Men* was

Although Chris Claremont doesn't mind delving into Logan's background and pitting him against Archangel, he does believe that the ongoing series risks "blatantly overexposing and weakening" Wolverine.

Triptych Art: Jim Lee/Scott Williams/Colors: Greg Wright

All Mutant War Button (Circle) Art: Jim Lee/Colors: Paul Mounts

The New Mutants' days are numbered.

Art: Jim Lee/Scott Williams

Look for another spotlight on Rogue as she and Magneto get reacquainted.

Havok may be joining the new government-sanctioned X-Factor, while Jean Grey goes back to the X-Men.

not John Byrne's, was not John Romita Jr.'s, or Marc Silvestri's or Paul Smith's or, now, Jim Lee's. Each artist, each editor who comes to the book has his own agenda which then meshes with mine in a different way. The synergy that results is different each time. The stories that I write with Jim are not the stories I wrote with Marc or with John Romita Jr. The way I wrote *New Mutants* with Bill Sienkiewicz is not the same way I wrote with Sal Buscema nor the way I did it with Jackson Guice. Sometimes the team clicks, sometimes it doesn't. That's the luck of the draw. Fortunately, on *X-Men*, it has been an extraordinarily successful run of creative mixes, regardless of how much it has changed."

Though Claremont promises that the "X-tinction Agenda" crossover will have real ramifications for the *X-Men* and their friends, he says the annual multi-title storylines are becoming a problem. "The hardest thing about doing the book these days is the prevalence of crossovers," he notes. "For at least a five-month period—the three months of the crossover, the month leading up and the month after—and sometimes much more, you can't deal with the book's ongoing storylines. You have to deal with this artificial encumbrance that has come in from left field. Even if it evolves out of the stories that you're doing, it still means derailing your own forward motion to an extent and shifting sideways into somebody else's playground. For Jim Lee, for example, it's like doing three fill-in issues: The *X-Men* issues don't follow consecutively upon themselves; it's an *X-Men* issue that leads into a *New Mutants* issue, that leads into *X-Factor*, that leads back into the *X-Men*. You have to read sideways each month. That takes a certain degree of zip out of things.

"And just the sheer problems of coordination! I can't do a plot until someone else finishes theirs, and they can't do theirs until mine is done," he explains. "You're trying to keep track of a huge number of characters that are all going in different directions at once. Among writers and artists across the board, I think you'll find a desire to just get past the crossover and get on to the really interesting stuff—their own stories. The unfortunate thing is that, given the nature of the industry, these crossovers are more likely than not to continue."

Claremont says he doesn't fear getting out of touch with his audience, although individual readers may lose interest in the mutants. "I try to keep

(continued on page 32)

Even with all the changes upcoming in the mutant books, does anyone doubt that Wolverine will remain a part of the team?

X-aminations & X-planations

Bob Harras, editor for *The Uncanny X-Men*, *The New Mutants* and *X-Factor*, promises that "a lot is going to happen in the next year" to Marvel's favorite mutant teams. "I know people often tend to say that," he says, "but we really are planning to do a great deal with the X-books. I think it's nice to shake people up every once in a while and say, 'Hey, we'll do something *totally* unexpected.'

"After 'The X-tinction Agenda,' the X-Men are shooting off into outer space to get Professor X back," Harras says. "Lila Cheney [Cannonball's girl friend] is escaping from the Shi'ar Empire, and she arrives at the X-Men's mansion to tell them that Xavier is in trouble, so they go off into outer space to rescue him."

In addition to having the X-Men, X-Factor and the New Mutants team up to save their original mentor, that issue will feature artwork from regular series artist Jim Lee, Michael Golden, Rick Leonardi and former *X-Men* artist John Byrne. "It's just our way of giving Jim some breathing space to catch up," Harras points out, "and also to get some really good artists working on the X-Men.

"We're then going to have an issue focusing on Magneto and Rogue," the editor continues, "which will develop their relationship and ultimately lead into a storyline for the spring. It will feature Magneto's confrontation with Thaladene, the character in the Savage Land who also has magnetic powers."

According to Harras, the X-Men will then head to Muir Island to wrap up the storyline with the Shadow King, who controls Moira McTaggert and the rest of the island's inhabitants. Although he admits the turnout of that adventure is still unknown at this point, he does promise that this sequence of stories will lead into a new *X-Men* title, which will hit the stands in late July/early August.

Once the Genosha conflict is resolved, the X-Men are spacebound to save Xavier.

"We're planning for several key, if not all, members of X-Factor to return to the fold and become X-Men again," the editor proclaims. "I would tend to think that Cyclops, Marvel Girl and the Beast are definites. We have to work out some of the storylines and then think about who would definitely stay or leave. One reason we're doing this is that if we're going to have another *X-Men* #1, I feel it would be neat to have the original five members in the book."

While *X-Men* will hit the stands twice a month from now on, the same cannot be said for *The New Mutants*, as the book's last issue will be #100. Fans of that title needn't be too disappointed, however, since Marvel plans on relaunching Cable and his charges in a new series this summer.

"We're doing this because, frankly, they're not *new* mutants anymore," Harras explains. "It just doesn't work anymore, and I was of the opinion that a *New Mutants* #101 means that the book is getting a little dated. These characters have to grow up a little bit, so let's just change them somewhat.

"X-Factor is going through some major changes as well," he adds, "and that's going to be based on the fact that since Mystique has apparently been killed, Freedom Force is going to fall apart. The government is going to need a new mutant spokesman group, and they're going to take the name X-Factor. In addition to possibly having some of the original members of X-Factor join the group, we have several other candidates in mind, including one who's quite surprising, since he has never been in a mutant book before and has been a mutant since he was first introduced. Havok is a leading contender to come in, and it works on what happened to him in 'The X-tinction Agenda.' "

Despite some new members in X-Factor, Bob Harras admits that there probably won't be many new characters introduced in the near future. "I think we have more than enough characters right now to keep everyone happy for the next 150 years," he laughs. "All we want to do is fine-tune the cast a little and bring the X-Men back to basics. I want to wrap up the dangling storylines we've had and start with new ones for the '90s."

—*Michael McAvennie*

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

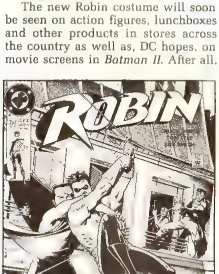
As Tim Drake has discovered, enthusiasm and a flimsy, garish outfit aren't enough to transform an energetic child into a suitable squire for the Dark Knight. But given the ever-increasing viciousness of Gotham's criminals, to say nothing of the still-fresh memory of Jason Todd's death, it isn't surprising that Batman plans not to repeat past mistakes. Instead, he prefers that others provide the newest Robin with a more effective costume and more thorough training.

Designed by Neal Adams, who had earlier created the outfit the Dick Grayson of Earth-2 ultimately wore, Tim Drake's uniform features a camouflage-oriented cloak, a Kevlar vest and an assortment of compartments filled with weapons, food and electronic hardware. But while it's certainly now geared towards keeping its wearer alive, there was a more "basic reason" for deviating from the brightly-hued suit worn by Robins past, according to Denny O'Neil, editor of the Batman titles.

"It was a very dated costume," he explains. "We thought we could make it a little more modern, a little classier maybe, a little more appropriate to a teenager than to a little kid. Also, we did want an excuse to put the hi-tech stuff in. This is the age of computers, after all.

"One of the problems with the old costume was that it wasn't really very practical for a dark, night character. One of Neal's inspirations was the reversible cape so you preserve the bright Robin motif, and yet, there's a certain logic to being able to cover up. And hell, school kids wear bulletproof vests these days. It seems to me that if I were in any kind of crimefighting business, I would certainly want to do that. As for computer links, I really don't know what they are, but Elliot Brown, who did the technology part of this, assures us that they would work. I'm perfectly willing to take his word for it."

The new Robin costume will soon be seen on action figures, lunchboxes and other products in stores across the country as well as, DC hopes, on movie screens in *Batman II*. After all,



"There's plenty of action," notes Chuck Dixon. "You really feel for **him 'cause he gets beat up during the mini-series."**

with all its protective gear and built-in equipment, this battle-ready Robin appears to have taken his cue from the film's heavily armored Batman.

"I don't know if it [the costume] was influenced [by the movie's]," says O'Neil, "but that probably played some part in the designer's thinking. We got about 15 different designs, and we, I swear, Scout's honor, liked this one the best. We sent them out to [*Batman* director] Tim Burton, and this was the one *he* liked best. So, it was a real consensus that this is the one we ought to go with. Some of the others were interesting, but we wanted to preserve the traditional Robin look and yet *update* it."

However, a reputation built up by others over a half-century was not something Tim Drake needed to inherit and so, given the task of furthering the latest Robin's training, writer Chuck Dixon, along with penciller Tom Lyle and inker Bob Smith, devised a five-issue "Trial" to make a man out of the Boy Wonder.

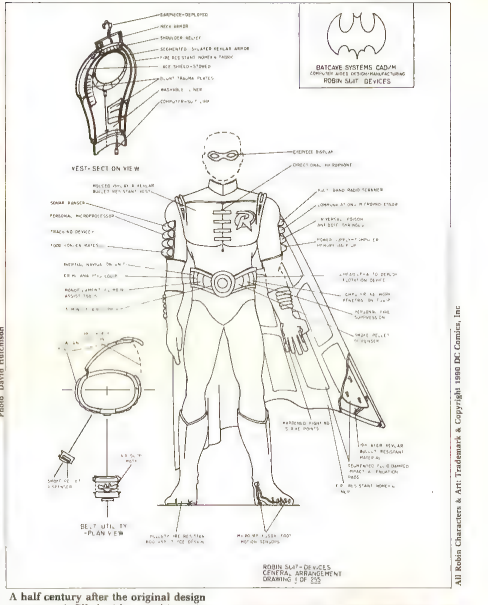
"No matter who Robin is, he's generally considered *just* a sidekick," Dixon reasons, "and I thought it would be challenging to deal with a sidekick as a primary character in a mini-series. And everybody seemed to have disliked Robin II so much that it was also a challenge to make a Robin people would *like*. Alan Grant [page 19] had laid some great groundwork in *Detective* for Tim Drake to be a really neat character, and as I talked to Denny O'Neil and Dan Raspler, I got even more interested in the direction they wanted the mini-series to take, a coming-of-age story with lots of fistfights.

"Tim Drake has a lot of self-doubt whether or not he can fill Robin's shoes, whether he could be a competent sidekick for Batman.

"He's not overconfident, which was obviously the problem with the previous Robin. He's not full of the wisecracks, although a transformation comes over him when he puts the costume on. He's pretty much a loner, which makes him match up with Batman. I always said Dick Grayson was much more sociable than Tim Drake. I mean, Dick Grayson, as they put him in college, was kind of hip. I don't think Tim Drake will *ever* be kind of hip. He's brainy, into computers, into books. He's like a really superathletic nerd in many ways."

Photo: Daval Hutcheson

Having introduced the new Robin to the world, Denny O'Neil (left) admits, "From now on, it's up to about three or four very talented writers and the fates to see where the character will go."



All Robin Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1988 DC Comics, Inc

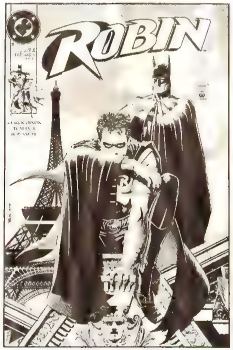
A half century after the original design comes a suit filled with everything a Boy Wonder needs for battling crime.

And just as his mentor once set off around the globe to complete his crimefighting education, so too does the young hero take his leave of the United States to add to his own. "It was John Lennon who said, 'Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans,' " Dixon recalls. "Robin *plans* to go to Paris to hone his martial arts skill and gain some confidence. And he never gets there. He begins to learn with the old master, that doesn't work out, and he immediately finds himself involved in a world-spanning conspiracy run by a knighted English nobleman who's also King Snake, dreaded Asian underworld figure. He becomes involved with a renegade Drug Enforcement Agency agent and Lady Shiva, and the three of them travel from France to Hong Kong, battling the King Snake and his henchperson Lynx, who I hope will be Robin's female nemesis, his Catwoman, along the way."

In the end, though, it matters little whether Tim Drake will be able to capture King Snake. It is the wandering attentions of readers he will have to arrest, and to Batman fans who've long taken his role for granted, he will need to prove that he is capable of supporting both his own title for a brief time and their interest over what DC would like to be many long years.

"I really think he can," says Chuck Dixon. "Robin had a run in *Star-Spangled Comics* back in the early '50s, and they were some really good stories, better than the Batman stories at the time. Robin as a character, and this Robin in particular, I think he's strong enough. Readers will get a kick out of him. He's no Hardy Boy."

"We tried to build Tim Drake carefully from the ground up to make him likable and, within the confines of our art form, believable. We have a gut feeling that you get when you've been doing it for 25 years that he *will* be popular and that we'll probably do other mini-series," remarks Denny O'Neil. "I think he'll certainly be more popular than Jason."



Art: Bryan Bollard

Fans who prefer extremely dark knights will be happy to know that "there's a lot of really grim and bitter stuff" in *Robin*, according to Dixon.

Cowan

(continued from page 18)

or Stan Lee standing there. They showed very few black artists, but there were quite a few."

Cowan says he isn't out to lead a crusade for greater black recognition, but has a simple strategy for blacks to change things: "Do the best work we can. That doesn't mean we have to picket comic book companies or lodge protests or anything. I try to do the best work I can, and do my part in making people aware of the role of black creators in comics," he says, pointing out the value of comic conventions for meeting the public.

His profile is rising in the comics field, as well, unlike the early days; he says fans used to approach him, surprised, saying, "I thought you were a Jewish woman!"

"Oh, it happens all the time!" he laughs. "Well, not as much now as when I was first getting into the industry. I got that a lot. Now, my picture has been all over the place, so I don't get it as much."

During his more than 10 years in comics, Cowan has been able to draw a wide variety of titles, but he says that now, drawing favorite characters doesn't appeal to him much.

"Nahhh. I'm not really into a superhero kind of thing, so there's no character I've really been waiting to sink my teeth into. Deathlok is one, but I'm working on him now. I did the last two issues of the mini-series, and there's talk about me doing the monthly book. *That's* one superhero character that I've always wanted to do. Deathlok was the character that made me want to do comics when I was growing up. Rich Buckler's work on him was, to me, some of the most phenomenal work of the '70s, and really influenced me at that time. Now, my influences are different, but I love the character.

"Now, I take much more from movies and life. My life experiences have changed since I was 18, so I try to bring that to my work. That seasoning and experience makes my art different. I've consciously tried to get better, and I think I've succeeded. But I'm nowhere near where I will be."

A seasoned professional at 30, Denys Cowan hasn't forgotten what it was like to be a struggling artist, hoping to break in. Today, he tells aspiring comic artists that it can be done, *if* they want it bad enough.

"Don't give up. It's a very difficult business to get into, and though there are plenty of opportunities, there are more and more people trying for them. Tenacity and believing in yourself sound like clichés, but it's all true, folks!"

Claremont

(continued from page 28)

some of the X-Men hip. Jubilee is a character who may be a little more with it in terms of modern culture than, say, Cyclops...but it's hard," he admits. "There comes a point where writer and reader diverge: Half the things that the readership probably listen to and enjoy are things I wouldn't touch with a 10-foot pole. There's always a danger that, when you start making characters incredibly hip, one, you sound like a poseur, you're throwing in the references to sound cool; and two, you end up dating yourself ferociously. Go back and look at the *Superman* or *Fantastic Four* issues where they meet the Beatles: 'Hey! Let's get mop-head haircuts on our guys! Whoa!' Things change so fast. What you have to do is find a way to keep the characters consistent with their levels of cultural strata, not the book itself."

A part of keeping any comic book current, says Claremont, is changing the look of the art. "There are certain looks to books—the way comics were done in 1963 isn't the way they were done in 1968 or '73 or '88 or '93, for that matter," he notes. "It's the evolution of style—the Todd McFarlane style that's so popular now probably wouldn't have even gotten in the door 15 years ago. By the same token, the Dave Cockrum style that was so effective on the *Legion of Super-Heroes* and *X-Men*, back in the early '70s, is much less so today."

Even Claremont admits he won't write *X-Men* until the day he dies—but he does believe the book should die the day he stops writing it. "As far as I'm concerned, they should *cancel* the book when I decide to leave—if ever," he declares. "What kind of writer should replace me? A cross between Archie Goodwin, Neil Gaiman, Walter and Louise Simonson, with a *soupçon* of Jim Lee and Frank Miller on the side; preferably someone who can draw their own material so they don't have to worry about it. What kind of writer? A real good one.

"When I leave the book, I would rather not even read it for a year or more afterwards. Anyone who comes on the title after I leave is going to have a different take on the characters, even if they think their vision is *exactly* the same as mine. Peter David once said that, in trying to write *Wolverine*, he found the only way he could write the character was exactly the way I wrote it—that's just the way the character appeared to him. Yet, when I read the stories he has written involving Wolverine, it seems to be a totally different character. It's not the voice I use at all, but in Peter's mind and ear, it is. Which shows that, even when you're trying to be just like someone else, it doesn't always work. The *Excalibur* written by people other than myself is nothing like the *Excalibur* I conceive of. This is not to say the stories are better or worse—just different. I'm sure other writers feel the same way when I use their characters."

But why has *X-Men* maintained its popularity for the 16 years Claremont has written the title? He says it's inherent in the nature of the concept.

"The *X-Men* has maintained the level it's achieved not because the art is incredibly flashy or the scripting incredibly brilliant—though I think on occasion both are true, sometimes even simultaneously—but because the core concept of the *X-Men*, the idea of outcasts, of rebels with a cause, strikes a resonant chord that seems to be as strong today as it was 16 years ago when we started the new book.

"The power of the title is that—when you strip away all the bullshit and all the skin-tight costumes and all the super-heroics—at bedrock, it's a book that is about something in a way that almost no other comic is: the nature of prejudice," he reveals. "These are people who, through no fault but that they were born, are branded as outcasts from society; they're looked at with suspicion and, in some cases, even outright hatred. This is something *everybody* can identify with. Teenagers can identify with it because that's the way they view the adult world that seems to surround them and cage them in; pick a minority—they can identify with it, whether it's a racial minority—blacks, Hispanics, Asians—or a cultural minority—gays, for example. It's a book that, in its fundamental theme, speaks to the relationship of a minority to a majority, and the tensions that result from that and the prejudice that's the negative outgrowth from it. And the desire in people to overcome that prejudice, one way or the other.

"Even at the book's most banal, even at its most gratuitous—which, over a 16-year run, you can find examples of—that theme is still part of *X-Men*. That theme makes it different from all the other comics out there. To me, if there's anything that says why the book is still around, that's it! When you pick up *X-Men*, there is something more there—or potentially so—than just a comic, just 22 pages of exciting punching and hitting and running and screaming. There is in the audience something that yearns for that," says Chris Claremont. "I *hope* there are people out there who are tired of being talked down to and being taken for granted."

TINY TOON Production ADVENTURES™

By BOB MILLER

Four animated guys offer looney lessons at Acme University.

Toon Languages

My criteria for a good short cartoon is that if it has no music or sound effects, and you are entertained, then you know you've got a good show." says Art Leonardi. "I tell many people, 'Take a show on the air, any cartoon show, turn the sound down to where there's no sound, and watch it.' Many of them fall apart, because they depend on the dialogue, the sound, the effects and the music to carry it. But if you can turn off *all* the sound and still get laughs from people, then you know you've got a great, great show."

Leonardi is the most experienced animator on *Tiny Toon Adventures*, having started at Warners in 1957, working for Bob McKimson and later, Friz Freleng. Then in 1964, Leonardi proceeded to work with the Pink Panther for 15 years. With Blake Edwards, he directed the openings for three Pink Panther movies. For DePatie-Freleng, he wrote, directed and animated many of the Panther cartoons. When the Panther shorts ceased production, Leonardi's unit left with Freleng to work for Marvel Productions.

"I did a title for Friz Freleng on the 'Pinky and Panky' show [from *Pink Panther and Sons*]," Leonardi says, "and Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera liked what I did. Iwao Takamoto [CS SPECTACULAR #3] requested that I work with him, so I was his right-hand guy for five years at H & B until I got the call to go to *Tiny Toons*. I talked it over with Iwao and he said it sounded like a good gig, try it."

The director notes, "In the old days at Warners, the director would bring the animator to his room, and act the scene out for him, and give him input that way. And he would go to his room and *do* it.

"But today, our animators and assistants are overseas. So, we have to make contact that way, at a distance. It's difficult for us to think we could just write a paragraph and send it to the Philippines or Japan, and expect them to interpret that when it's not even in their language."

However, Leonardi devised a unique method of penetrating the language barrier with the episode "Things That Go Bump in the Night."

"What I did was put a video camera on myself, and I acted out the whole half-hour show, scene by scene," Leonardi reveals. "So, if they had any questions about what my intent was, all they had to do was watch the video, and that doesn't mean they have to follow me exactly. It's a suggestion, and a mood that I'm putting across to them. And on there, I mentioned backlighting, shadows, to get into the correct mood, and they followed it. It really helped them. They said, 'Please, send *more* videotapes.' "

Other Leonardi episodes include "The Buster Bunny Bunch," a parody of *The Mickey Mouse Club*. This included "The Anvil Chorus," in which Plucky Duck is bombarded with falling anvils.

" 'The Anvil Chorus' to me is just as good as any classic cartoon I've seen. It is *really funny*," Art Leonardi says proudly.

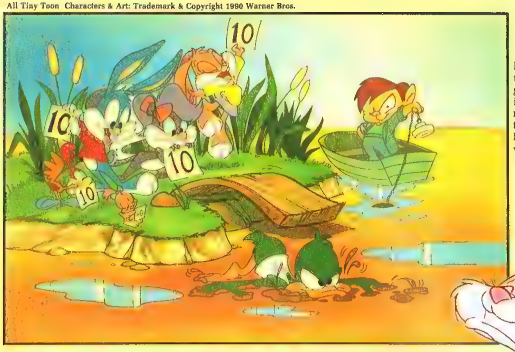
"At the beginning of any show, you're going to have a little ironing-out process, of people not knowing the characters and what their personalities are. They may be weak or we may have used a studio that wasn't strong enough, and we have to weed them out, find the best ones. We've come around pretty good in just one year of nailing these characters down.

"Consequently, if the show gets picked up—and I hope it is—with the crew used to these characters, we should be doing really great stuff." ●

Photo: Courtesy Art Leonardi

The test of a good cartoon, says Leonardi, is if it's funny *without* the sound.

All Tiny Toon Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Warner Bros.



Fitzgerald has taken an interest in getting Plucky Duck into trouble. His next trick is a sequel to "The Great Piggybank Robbery" with Pluck Twacy.

Toon Acting

What I'm trying to achieve is *acting*," says director Eddie Fitzgerald. "The whole reason I'm in the animation industry is because I like cartoon acting. And so, I try to set up a scene so that the acting carries it, not just the story points, not just the pacing.

"Of course, all of those are very important, but mainly, I want the acting to handle it, in the way Ralph Kramden walks around the table, yelling at his wife in *The Honeymooners*: the way his eyes bug out, the way he slaps the table, the way he does a slow burn, things like that. That's really why you watch the show. The rest is just a set-up, to allow you to enjoy those times when he's really acting to the max. So, I try to set up many situations that allow a character to act."

According to Fitzgerald, he has worked "everywhere" in the Saturday morning business for the past 11 years. His credits include animating *Fat Albert*, *He-Man* and *Flash Gordon* for Filmation and directing the new *Beany & Cecil* for DIC. He also directed *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures* for Ralph Bakshi, a series which significantly affected his approach to 'tooning.

"Mine is mainly the traditional '40s influence. However, if I had to choose a second influence, it was certainly *Mighty Mouse* and John Kricfalusi. *Mighty Mouse* for me was the most original thing *ever* done on Saturday morning. It was a *stunning* achievement that John and Ralph Bakshi did. I don't see how anyone working in comedic cartoons can *not* be influenced heavily by that. In my opinion, *Mighty Mouse*'s influence will last for decades.

"I'm influenced by the color, by the emphasis on acting (although I believed that before, I believe in it even more, now that I've worked on *Mighty Mouse*)," Fitzgerald says. "I'm influenced by the irreverence, and by the theory that John had, that leaves me gasping even now. And that is, you never repeat yourself. Now, I *have* repeated myself sometimes. I should be damned for it. But, as an ideal anyway, I liked the idea that *Mighty Mouse* was committed to where you don't draw the same drawing twice. You try to avoid formulas. You try to pioneer."

When the chance came to become involved with *Tiny Toon Adventures*, Fitzgerald was especially delighted.

"I like Warner Bros. a lot," he says frankly. "I sought out *Tiny Toons* because it looked like they were doing Golden Age Warner Bros. material. That's my favorite type of cartoon. I just went right for it. I was one of the first several people involved, and it has really been fun."

During his tenure at *Tiny Toons*, Fitzgerald has contributed in a number of ways—as writer, director, layout man, storyboard artist, and, for a few weeks, as an animation supervisor in Korea.

"Actually, I've worn so many hats in this place, I've done almost everything there is to do here," he laughs.

Pressed to reveal which Warners director influenced him the most, Fitzgerald states unequivocally:

"*Bob Clampett*! I think he was truly one of the most gifted directors in *any* medium, including live action. I would put him right up there with Charlie Chaplin, Orson Welles.

"The other directors, like Chuck Jones, are excellent people, but I'm not in their power. They're telling a story which I can choose to listen or not to listen to. But Bob *never* gives you a choice. You don't *have* a choice whether to watch a Bob cartoon, because if you watch the first 10 seconds, you're in for the whole six minutes. And that's why I think he's the best director Warner ever had.

"It was fun for me sitting here and facing some of the same problems that Bob Clampett had at his peak in the '40s, and being *right* at the juncture that he was at. You know, I'll be doing a cartoon that has a similar sort of pacing in some respects, and it's *exhilarating* and scary. I have a much deeper insight into his cartoons now that I've faced the same problems.

"On the other hand, after working in his style, partly, for almost a year, in a sense, I've worked out of it," Fitzgerald says with a chuckle. "Like when you begin, you always imitate the people that you love the most. Beginning painters do that. In the process of doing that, I've discovered my own style.

"The film that I'm doing now, the Pluck Twacy one, is a sequel to 'The Great Piggybank Robbery.' I think this show will be more personal. The

Model Sheet Art: Ken Boyer

Photo: Courtesy Eddie Fitzgerald

Eddie Fitzgerald is a firm believer in visual comedy (and gag makeup photos).

Mighty Mouse Art: Copyright 1988 Bakshi Animation

"*Mighty Mouse* was the most original thing *ever* done on Saturday morning," says Fitzgerald.

others I did—because they were animated overseas and because of problems with getting them together on deadline, when we were still trying to figure out where the series was going—are *not* really that distinctive."

Although he doesn't have a favorite segment, Fitzgerald *does* have a favorite sequence from "Duck Out of Luck."

"Plucky becomes Duck Daring, and he's with these three soldiers, and they sing the Duck Daring theme song (which I wrote), 'Jump for Justice'—which is what they do to Plucky."

Fitzgerald chuckles. "Bob Camp boarded it and Chris Reccardi and Mike Fontanelli laid it out. That sequence, really makes me laugh.

"Now, if *only* we could do this show again and get more sequences like that. That's definitely my favorite in the whole series."

One of the biggest ways to improve cartoons, Fitzgerald comments, is to reform the way scripts are done, by shortening them.

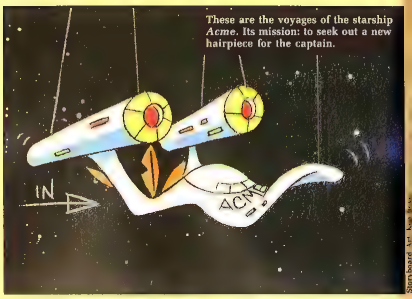
"They're too long. They're at least double, sometimes triple the length," he observes. "We need to go to something like a page a minute. The reason is, at that length, the script is short enough so that we can still add acting and visual comedy. If it's longer than that, usually, you're just rushing ahead of the next plot point and there's no time for acting. And cartoon acting is the whole fun that you have in making cartoons.

"That's why people watch animation, I believe, and we're *not* giving it to them. One of the reasons is because we've given in to clients who don't understand our medium, who insist on several plots and subplots in every cartoon. And we're so anxious to get the work that they give us that we don't argue. They have to be educated to realize that short scripts make good, comedic films."

For Eddie Fitzgerald, making cartoons as funny and entertaining as possible is a great obligation.

"I believe that we have a responsibility to the great people of the past, who have given us the good things that we have," he says. "In the '40s, these were *geniuses* who were working in the animation industry. And they've given us *so much*, that we have a responsibility to give the next generation something of equal value *if* we possibly can. I hope we can." ●

TINY TOON Directors ADVENTURES



These are the voyages of the starship *Acme*. Its mission: to seek out a new hairpiece for the captain.

Storyboard art from Buns...

Toon Beginnings

I take a lot of stock in the next generation of animators," says Ken Boyer. "They want the chances just like anybody when they first started out. You've got to be the one to give it to them, be understanding about their troubles and help them through it."

In his mid-20s, Boyer is the youngest *Tiny Toons* director, possessing an enormous amount of enthusiasm for his work.

"I would like to think that any enthusiasm I have for a project will hopefully spread over even into the jaded people," he says. "I have a tendency to at least try and do that.

"Any time you put somebody in charge who cares enough, you'll get a better show. Like John Kricfalusi—his *Mighty Mouse* looks so good because he cared all the time. He's in there helping the layout artists, doing character designs; I do the same thing here. So, that was a good influence on me."

At age 17, Boyer started his career at Ruby-Spears Enterprises. Five years later, he directed the snake dance sequence in *The Chipmunk Adventure*, then worked as a layout artist and supervisor on Ralph Bakshi's *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*, and designed characters and storyboards for two years on Disney's *DuckTales* and *Winnie the Pooh*. Boyer notes that each of these projects marked the next step in improving TV animation quality.

"*Mighty Mouse* was a big leap forward. *Winnie the Pooh* was really lush, way better than anything that had been done in television at that point. *Rescue Rangers wasn't*, but boy, we *tried*. It just had inherent problems in areas that were totally out of our artistic hands."

Then came a call from *Tiny Toons* producer Tom Ruegger, with an offer for Boyer to design and direct that series, beginning in January 1989.

"I left Disney just as *Rescue Rangers* was almost halfway through," Boyer says. "To go to Warner Bros. was, I thought, a good opportunity to really do the next step forward, and they let me call the shots as far as insisting that layouts would be done over here [in America].

"At that point, there was no other TV animation house doing layouts," he recalls. "After working with John Kricfalusi on *Mighty Mouse*, I *really* learned to appreciate the value of that phase of production, and I insisted they use that from the start.

"For the first six weeks, it was just Tom Ruegger and me, and then Alfred Gimeno came on," Boyer says. "I did nothing but design the characters, developed the bible that we presented to Amblin and got all the character designs OK'ed through them and through Warner Bros. hierarchy.

"When we were putting the presentation bible together, I did 14 designs, cleaned them up *and* did them in color, *and* we put the whole bible together in a week. It was a *lot* of work, and it was really tough."

Boyer created the original designs, model sheets, poses and turnarounds for each Tiny Toon. He reveals, "There were stipulations, like all the characters had to have large feet and large heads. That became a *challenge* to design the characters and still make them look good. It seemed like a real stumbling block at first, but once we had gotten into the show, we managed to make that work."

Designs were finalized by committee decision, with some modifications made. Tom Ruegger suggested the demented look on Sweetie Pie, and Jeff Pidgeon designed Hamton Pig.

"The designs I had done for Hamton were real animatable," Boyer says. "But they didn't think it was far enough away from Porky Pig. It *was*, but they didn't feel it was at all. And so, they used Jeff Pidgeon's design. It had a huge head that was two-thirds of his body, and he had this tiny little

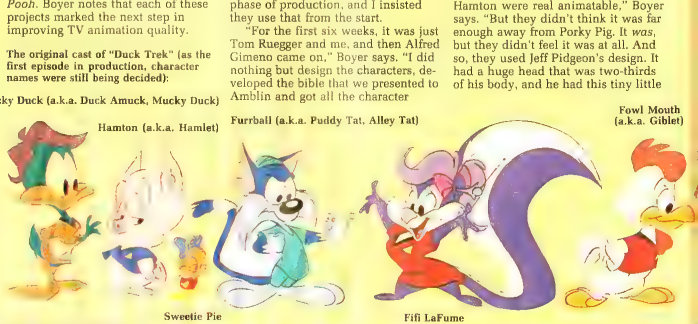
The original cast of "Duck Trek" (as the first episode in production, character names were still being decided):

Plucky Duck (a.k.a. Duck Amuck, Mucky Duck)

Hamton (a.k.a. Hamlet)

Furrball (a.k.a. Puddy Tat, Alley Tat)

Fowl Mouth (a.k.a. Giblet)



Sweetie Pie

Fifi LaFume

Another deleted scene from "Duck Trek" of Lt. Fifi opening hailing frequencies.

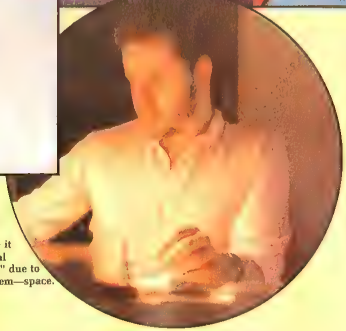
body that looks completely off-balance all the time. So, every time we did Hamton, we had to throw away those proportions on the model sheets that Amblin and everybody else had OK'ed. We had to fake his proportions so that he could even scratch his head, or whatever. So, he was a difficult character to work with."

Boyer admits his Warner Bros. influences to be Chuck Jones and Frank Tashlin. "But I would say that my general artistic style is influenced by people like Glen Keane," he adds, "and maybe a general overall Disney feeling, which was more of a fundamentalist draftsmanship approach, rather than a stylistic thing, since Glen's approach to character design is slightly different than traditional Disney."

Of the *Tiny Toons* episodes he has directed, Boyer's favorites include "Her Wacky Highness" for its production value, and "Pollution Solution" for its humor, much of which he credits to the storyboards by Barry Caldwell. Boyer also helped direct "The Looney Beginning," the pilot special, "Duck Trek," "Prom-ise Her Anything" and the "A Walk On The Flip Side" segment of "The Acme

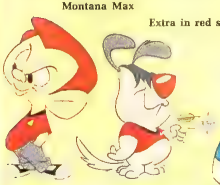
Storyboard Art: Ken Boyer

Storyboard Art: Ken Boyer



Boyer: Photo & Most Tiny Toons Art: Courtesy Ken Boyer

All the storyboards rendered by Ken Boyer didn't make it into the final "Duck Trek" due to lack of—ahem—space.



Montana Max

Extra in red shirt

Art: Ken Boyer

Gossamer and friend

Shirley the Loon (a.k.a. Shirley McLoon)

Boyer's original and more proportionate design for Hamton Pig, which was thought to resemble Porky Pig too much.

Early Hamton Design: Ken Boyer
Model Sheet Art: Ken Boyer

Acres Zone," a *Twilight Zone* parody in which Montana Max wakes up as a rabbit.

"I've talked to people at Disney Television who've seen our episodes," Boyer says, "and they're so stunned that they said it's like a slap in the face. They're ashamed. Disney Television has been the leader in TV animation quality for years now, and we've so far surpassed them, they were stunned.

"I think it's because of the cartoony nature of these characters. I really love the Disney stuff, too, but the types of acting that the Warner Brothers characters do is so much broader."

So, does Boyer expect *Tiny Toon Adventures* to inspire Disney and other studios to improve their work?

"My challenge to them is, can they *do* it? Because they've got almost all experienced personnel over there. My unit, for one, consisted of young talent [from CalArts] that has never worked in the business before. And we've already kicked their butt, without even trying.

"We're working faster than they are, way faster," Boyer asserts. "I know because I worked over there—and I know people who still work over there—how much time they're doing their stuff in. We don't have nearly the time to do boards, the scripts, the models or layouts. All of the pre-production that we do over here gets done in less time than they have. And our shows look way better and we're using inexperienced talent.

"It's a matter of, do people—like directors and producers—do they *care* enough?" Ken Boyer points out.

"You have to get in there and roll your sleeves up and do the drawings for the guys, or whatever it takes to make it come across as funny as it should be at that moment. Get the prettiest picture in each scene, the nicest composition, and the acting. Acting is everything. Let's face it. If you don't have the acting, it's really not worth watching." ●

Can you pick out animator Art Vitello?

Toon Directing

Defining his approach to directing cartoons, Art Vitello ponders for a moment.

"I don't know that you're aware of what your own style is," he says. "It's a mix of things because wherever I go, I try and accomplish what the show seems to call for, for me, anyway. It reflects the artists that you hire, their type of work, the designers you have. Everybody's different. So, you find that works in the style that you're looking for. That's great, because then that helps the show take on an overall personality. All the people working on the show have influence. As the director, you have a certain idea that you're really trying to go for, but by the same token, you try to see how everybody else's ideas would fit in on the project.

"Sometimes, if somebody didn't have a gag, I would walk around the studio and ask, 'Hey, anybody got a joke?' " Vitello laughs.

A colleague acknowledges Art Vitello to be the most relaxed, most confident of the *Tiny Toons* directors. For more than 20 years, he has worked in the animation industry, beginning full-time directing at DePatie-Freleng with Friz Freleng. At Marvel Productions, he became a producer/director with the syndicated *Spider-Man* series.

"Then, I took a hiatus for a while and I went to do special FX for ILM in Northern California," Vitello recalls. "So, I actually crossed paths working on a Steven Spielberg movie, *Poltergeist*. I did the ghost animation coming out of the TV set."

Vitello returned to Hollywood to produce more cartoons, helping Disney with its fledgling TV animation division. Beginning in 1985, he produced Disney's *Adventures of the Gummi Bears* for two seasons. After another break, he moved to DIC Enterprises, where he produced the *Slimer!* segments of *The Real Ghostbusters*. In 1989, he joined the Warners staff to direct *Tiny Toon Adventures*, and since his *Slimer!* crew was "between projects" at the time, Vitello brought them along as well.

Vitello has directed many *Tiny Toons*, including "Wheel 'O' Comedy," "Citizen Max," "Hare-Raising Night," "Rock and Roar" and "Hollywood Plucky."

He's fond of one sequence in "Wheel 'O' Comedy," suggested by storyboard artist Bruce Timm, in which Elmyra forces Dizzy Devil to take a bath, lampooning the shower sequence in *Psycho*.

"We had the violins going *reeet-reeet-reeet-reeet*. Everybody knows that there's a shadow that comes up behind the curtain, and there's a lot of cutting to faces and screaming," the director says. "We just turned it into

the fact that she was washing him. And everybody knows the shot where water goes down the drain, so we did that with soap suds. And then you cross-dissolve to the eye and pull back, and our punchline was, any kind of wet animal is all skin and bones. And that got a pretty good

Photo: Art Leonardi

Model Sheet Art: Ken Boyer

Vitello unleashed Elmyra against poor Dizzy Devil (formerly Tiny Taz) in a send-up of *Psycho*'s shower scene.

laugh every time I've shown it."

Tiny Toon Adventures presents stories in the traditional six-minute shorts, but also in a half-hour format, which Vitello finds challenging.

"The 30-minute formats are 22 minutes *without* commercials. That's an interesting problem to me to present a Warner Bros. feel to it along with the story, which is not usually the way they used to be. You get a premise and you build it with gags, and then you get a punchline. That's the way the shorts are. With the longer format, they set up more of a complicated story, like on *Gummi Bears*, where we were much more story-oriented."

Vitello cites a number of influences on his style: Disney, Jay Ward, Friz Freleng, Chuck Jones, etc.

"I like a whole lot of different things: live action film, writers, books, comics," he says. "There are just so many things; they just all mix in for me. As opposed to others, who have one animation kind of person.

"But there's one director I really like a lot: [Hayao] Miyazaki. He did *Nausicaa*, *Lapüta*. He's a really good director, more naturalistic."

For Art Vitello, working on *Tiny Toon Adventures* was as hectic as life on Acme Acres.

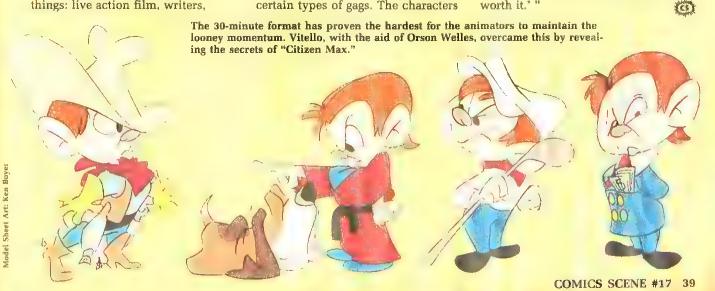
"There's a *lot* of material to turn out," Vitello says. " 'Cause if each unit is turning out 15 half-hours, times three—how long did it take them to do 45 shorts in the '40s? Think of how much material we're eating up. It's a *staggering* amount. It's amazing because you get to a point where you can't help but repeat certain types of gags. The characters are going to fall, hit walls. So, really, the question is, 'How are we going to do it *this* time? And in what context is this character doing it? How can we make it different from the last time?.

"So, even though you might come upon a similar situation, you try very hard to think, 'Well, how can we play it *this* time?', so that somebody's not falling asleep because they saw this gag 50 times already.

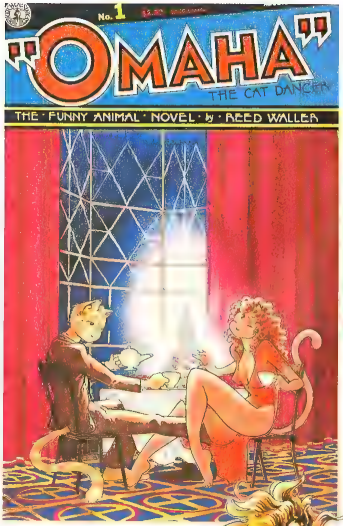
"For me, just finishing a project like this is a great thing to do. You can just go, 'Aw, I can relax now.' " Art Vitello laughs. " 'Cause it's a *lot* of work.

"But, if you've seen a *Tiny Toons* and liked it, we're getting some good results. It's nice to get a show back and go, 'Ah, good. The hard work was worth it.' "

The 30-minute format has proven the hardest for the animators to maintain the looney momentum. Vitello, with the aid of Orson Welles, overcame this by revealing the secrets of "Citizen Max."



Model Sheet Art: Ken Boyer



All Omaha Art & Characters Copyright 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 Reed Waller & Kate Worley

Omaha began as a parody of a specific political climate, but the book's characters had other things in mind.

"Some people who don't read *any* other comics at all are fascinated by our characters," says Waller.

The word "unique" is used too often on the comics scene today. Still, what else would one call a black and white independent title in which animals act like humans, where soap opera, satire and sex—often explicit—are successfully combined?

A book like *Omaha the Cat Dancer* can be difficult to describe to potential readers, as artist Reed Waller and writer Kate Worley freely admit.

"The phrase we've been using for several years is that it's an adult funny-animal soap opera," says Worley. "We're pretty happy with that. Some people think we're denigrating the book when we call it a soap opera, but they forget that Charles Dickens wrote soap operas. Serials are a *very* honorable form of entertainment."

Cat N

All Omaha Art Reed Waller/Courtesy Kitchen Sink Press

Creator Reed Waller mirrored Omaha's contemplative manner on issue #2. He was stuck, until Kate Worley joined him as scripter.

"I like to think that *Omaha* owes more to Dickens than to anything else literary," says Waller, "because it's the same kind of approach—dream up a bunch of good characters and just let 'em go!"

Omaha was actually created by Waller in the mid-70s, when he was doing some work for undergrounds.

"I had been following underground comix—Robert Crumb and all the various people who had been doing the interesting stuff in the early '70s," Waller explains. "I wanted to take it a little further. I had been living in St. Paul at the time, and there was a lot of cracking down on the local strip bars. I was inspired to do a story about a stripper, a parody, and use that as a vehicle for lampooning the local political bluenose climate. I got a few chapters into it, and the charac-

Using her feminine, feline wiles, "Omaha the Cat Dancer" entertains a very adult audience.

ips

By
KIM
HOWARD
JOHNSON

"A couple of people finally caught on about Omaha—that Omaha was actually Reed in a fuzzy feminine disguise!" laughs Worley.

ters just took over. I tossed out most of the local satirical stuff that I handed her in the first place, and just went with the straight story.

"Denis Kitchen had been getting *Vootie*, and I wrote to him when I was fairly well along, and I said, 'You think there's anything to do with this?' He wrote back and said, 'I've been waiting for you to get a hold of me.' "

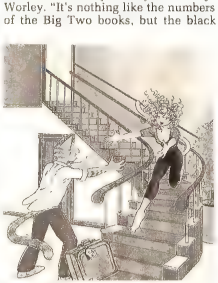
Up to that point, Worley hadn't been involved with *Omaha*, though she was personally involved with Waller. "Reed and I had been together for some time on a personal level, almost two years, and we had been carefully respecting each others' work to the extent of not talking about it," she explains.

"Reed started working on *Omaha* #2 and had done a few pages, and they went into a drawer and stopped. I finally worked up my nerve one night and asked him if he was ever going to finish it. He told me he was stuck, and I made a few suggestions, and he sat there very quietly for a few minutes and said, 'Do you want a job?'

"I had been writing radio comedy—that's what I knew about script writing and certainly about dialogue-writing. I was used to writing without pictures at all!" laughs Worley. "I hated writing dialogue, and now, of course, that's what I do, but I get to describe what's going on, too, and I don't have to be tidy about it in scripts, and it has since led me on to the other stuff. So, we started from there. We turned that one out in three weeks flat once we got started."

The popularity of *Omaha* has continued to grow ever since, even when other black and white and independent comics came upon hard times.

"For a black and white independent, it does *exceptionally* well," says Worley. "It's nothing like the numbers of the Big Two books, but the black and white crash didn't touch us. Our numbers continued to rise throughout!"



"It's pretty clear in our book how people feel about each other," notes Worley. "And that sex is not something that comes out of a tube."

"People tend to empathize with funny animals," Waller explains, "because they're more accessible."

The reason for *Omaha*'s appeal isn't difficult for the pair to pin down.

"People are interested in people," says Worley.

"They find it true to life—that's what we hear," Waller adds.

"We're read by a number of people who don't read comics. Some people who don't read *any* other comics at all are fascinated by our characters. I think the original cast was just so exquisitely drawn that people got very involved with them right away, and have been that way with additional characters that have come in since, with Huddle and with Rob [a popular gay cast member]," notes Worley.

"I think we were very successful with Rob, because by the time any homosexual activity came up, they already liked the guy! Nobody was offended, because they knew this guy, and they liked him, and that's what broke down the barrier, even among young straight male readers who Denis was at one time concerned would be horrified and frightened off. We didn't get that reaction at all, quite the opposite," she says proudly.

The title has broken new ground in other ways—featuring a wheelchair-bound character named Shelley who learns that her handicap need not be a barrier to a satisfying sex life.

"That has been incredibly rewarding, because we've gotten a lot of feedback from a couple of longtime fans who are wheelchair-bound," says Worley. "It was my way, too, of dealing with the guilt of a kind of

SIGH... STILL, I GUESS IT'LL BE WORTH IT. EASIER TO MEET PEOPLE WHEN YOU CAN LOOK THEM IN THE EYE.
WELL, THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE IN WHEELCHAIRS, Y'KNOW.
... BUT I DON'T WANT TO JUST TALK ABOUT BEING "HANDICAPPED."
I SEE YOUR POINT. BUT I BET THERE ARE GROUPS ABOUT ALL KINDS OF THINGS. I KNOW THE WHEELCHAIR RACERS HAVE A CLUB.

The *Omaha* team have received praise for their treatment of Shelley's handicap, and the avoidance of comics clichés.

cheating. Shelley was assumed to be dead, though we hadn't actually had her buried, and instead of bringing her back new and perfect, which usually happens in comics...Well, I told a panel recently, 'I do death the way it really happens, and people think it's very original.' Being realistic gives you the merit of originality in this field!"

" 'Where do you get those crazy ideas?' " jokes Waller.

"We get letters from people saying, 'You've been reading my diary again!' You feel like you're communicating with people in very interesting ways."

" 'You're bugging our bedroom!' " Waller laughs.

Although the characters in *Omaha* are fictional, some real-life persons have provided inspiration.

"They're composites. And different characters represent more different aspects of me, or different aspects of Reed. A couple of people finally caught on about Omaha—that Omaha was actually Reed in a fuzzy feminine disguise!" laughs Worley. "She expressed a lot of his personality more than anything else."

"Much of what comes out with the characters in the first couple of books that I wrote, the interactions and reactions were stuff that I drew from the people that I knew," explains Waller. "Many of the characters were composites of one or two friends, or friends of friends. People like Shelley are roughly based on somebody that really exists, but just like any other character, no matter how you start with 'em, you're never really sure where they're gonna go. Eventually, they evolve into something of their own."

Comments Worley, "I'm finding that there are more real incidents worked into the story tailored to a degree to the characters. In the last few books, there's actually more and more of that. The experience that Omaha had of working in an office where she was not allowed to leave during her lunch hour—I worked in that office, and it still exists. Some people say, 'Well, small towns are like that,' but it happened in a big city! The head salesman drove two Deloreans, and we made minimum wage. It was a ghastly situation. And cases like the one in the feminist bookstore, with the handicapped stuff being on too high a shelf, actually happened. So, you gotta use things like that when they fall in your lap!"

The team plots *Omaha* in advance, but, as Waller has noted, the cast have taken on lives of their own.

"I'm *sure* there are things that are gonna come up that I don't know about yet," Worley agrees. "It's exciting, because it's like writing life, which is unpredictable, and anything can happen. That's how I feel about the story. There are definite developments that I want to see happen. I don't like to predict anymore exactly when, although now I've learned how to outline—I'm working for somebody who makes me do it!" she laughs. "So probably, we'll have better outlines for publicity purposes in the future. But it's very difficult, because something may be in the works for a number of issues before it comes to a head. I've got at least a year's worth

***Twins Peaks* has Laura Palmer, *Omaha* has the bull-headed Senator Calvin Bonner. It's another mystery that will grow more complex before it ends.**

thought out, as far as things I would like to see happen. Right now, we're in the middle of this big murder case, and *Twin Peaks* comes out! It's starting to get weird! There's just so much that can be played with, both in political satire and relationship issues."

THIS ONE'S A WILDCAT! IF YOU'RE IN A HURRY, BOY YOU'D BETTER TURN AROUND.
SHE'S A WILDCAT! NO ONE'S EVER CAUGHT HER. NO ONE'S EVER BROUGHT HER DOWN...
... SHE'S A WILD CA-AA-AT!

One of the most unique aspects of *Omaha* is the use of anthropomorphic characters to deal with such adult subject matter; in fact, the title could have used human characters with no major changes. Waller believes there are several advantages to the "funny animal" format.

"In the first place, it was done when I was working for an exclusively funny animal magazine," he explains. "Those were the ground rules under which it was built, so I had to do funny animals for a reason, anyway. But for me, I found them to be much easier to work with—they're better actors than the more conventionally drawn human characters.

"It's easier for people to suspend disbelief, and I can get much more subtlety. I always have the choice of being very subtle or playing very broadly, and the range of what's permissible is very wide. People tend to empathize with funny animals much better than they do with human characters, because they're more accessible, they're not intimidating, they don't look like somebody attempting to draw a particular human and not really pulling it off. They can be very specific and yet very simple at the same time."

The use of animals is also an advantage in many of the sex scenes as well, Worley points out. "We can get past peoples' barriers, because our kind of readers seem to be responsive to animals, which is a sign of healthy people. I'm always a little wary of people who don't like animals," she says. "But I think we can get past peoples' discomfort. Fur is basically sensual, and even though our characters are, to a large degree, wearing skin, you kind of put that on them, and people who themselves may have a lot of body armor may still respond more to the animals' sensuality."

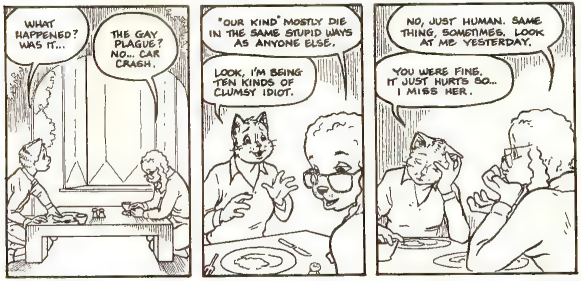
"There's a deliberate attempt here in using them to depict intimate human relations to make the connection between adult sexuality and infantile associations with stuffed toys and pet kitties and puppies," explains Waller. "The need for affection and contact that everyone has is more universal than just sex and it goes back farther."

Publishing a more explicit book in generally repressive times has caused problems for the pair. However, Worley has become even angrier recently because they are now being tied in with some of the "not only extremely explicit, but extremely violent material that's coming out, and is dragging us down with it *again*.

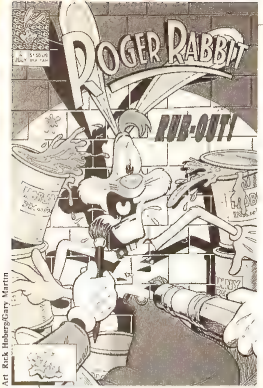
"After all of the fighting that we and Denis have done for freedom...We're promoting good sex as a healthy, normal thing, and I think that makes us all the more dangerous. We upset some people more because we actually portray sex in a very positive light, and even showing that bad sex happens to good people who love each other—which are pretty revolutionary things," explains Worley. "It's pretty clear in our book how people feel about each other, and that exploitive situations are exploitive. We don't confuse the two."

"And that sex is not something that comes out of a tube. It's a thing that real people do with each other," Waller adds. "It's different every time, and it's not any more predictable than anything else that people can do."

"We get in more trouble than some people because of doing it in funny animals. Lots of people hold the belief that comic books are entirely for children and that funny animals *particu-*


WHAT HAPPENED? WAS IT...
THE GAY PLAGUE? NO... CAR CRASH.
"OUR KIND" MOSTLY DIE IN THE SAME STUPID WAYS AS ANYONE ELSE.
LOOK, I'M BEING TEN KINDS OF CLUMSY IDIOT.
NO, JUST HUMAN. SAME THING, SOMETIMES, LOOK AT ME YESTERDAY.
YOU WERE FINE. IT JUST HURTS SO... I MISS HER.

Another tricky subject was circumvented because readers got to like Rob before Waller & Worley fully explored him.



Art: Rick Hoberg/Gary Martin

Roger & Me

While *Omaha* writer Kate Worley has moved to Toontown, there's no fear of censoring *Roger Rabbit*.

Roger Rabbit and Omaha, the Cat Dancer may both be comic book animals, but Kate Worley—who scripts the adventures of the funny animal pair—says that's where the similarities end.

"It's a completely different mind-set," Worley says of writing for Disney Comics. "The environments that the stories take place in there are very structured, and I'm working with an editor at Disney, which normally I *don't* do.

"Instead of it being an ongoing story of somewhat varying length but going on forever, I have 18 pages, and it *must* have a beginning, middle and an end. It's very different [from *Omaha, the Cat Dancer*], but I'm enjoying it. I like my editor at Disney a great deal—he's just a champ."

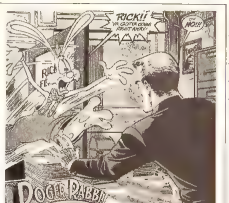
The guidelines imposed on Worley in writing *Roger Rabbit* are determined by the film. "I have a writer's bible," she says, "but we're very much enclosed by the world of the movie. We're very limited, because of other projects in the works that we can't step on. So, we have to color in the lines, but it's working very well.

"One pleasant aspect is that Gary Wolf, who wrote the original novel *Who Censored Roger Rabbit?*, likes the comic and thinks it's very true to both the movie and the original novel. It was very nice to find out—I guess I'm satisfying everybody. I mean, my friends like it, and my friends' kids like it. I'm finding out a lot that I can do that I didn't know I could do, because I hadn't been put in the position of *having* to do it!"

Both Disney editors Len Wein and Cody Weiss were familiar with Worley's work on *Omaha*, so when they began working at Disney Comics, they decided to give her a call.

"They were hunting for talent. Then, [*Roger Rabbit* editor] David Seidman called, because we were talking about doing *Goofy Adventures*, and he said, 'But what I really need is a writer for *Roger Rabbit*.' And I said, 'Really?' Because I adored the movie, and I loved the original novel. They were patient with me while I hacked around for a couple of months getting the feel of it, and now it's rolling pretty good! And being on the ground floor is nice.

"The stories are all going to be little thrillers, little mysteries. We've introduced Rick, Roger's detective partner, and they're pretty much all going to follow that format, mini-versions of the movie to a degree," Worley says, explaining that a new detective sleuth is in the comics because Bob Hoskins' likeness couldn't be used. "Rick is a



Art: Rick Hoberg/Dave Simons

Unable to use Bob Hoskins' likeness, a new detective, Rick, was introduced.

developing character, and he has some interest, too—maybe eventually he'll be in some longer work, rather than just the 18-page stories, and get to explore things.

"And 1947 was a great year, a great deal of stuff happened. We're trying to sneak in social satire underneath the comedy. Just the concept of Toons is fun—you can play with that endlessly!"

Still, Worley is confident that there won't be a new rabbit character appearing in *Omaha*, nor will there be any cat dancer in *Roger Rabbit* ("If we did that, they would own her!" she says, horrified).

"I have to keep the two worlds very separate. I choose to—there was some concern at first, and my editor and I shook in our shoes when I started this. Len says part of the fun of his job now is having people say, 'Not *that* Kate Worley?!' I enjoy the chance to show people that my mind isn't totally corrupted, and I can just do funnies!

"I'm enjoying it; it's a nice change of pace. I like doing all-ages stuff, too. It's nice having a foot in two worlds!"

—*Kim Howard Johnson*

Roger Rabbit Art & Characters Copyright 1990 The Walt Disney Company & Amblin Entertainment

larly are for children," says Worley. "So, we've perhaps had more trouble on that account because many people are abusing hard-won freedoms, in my opinion. It does get me irritated, because we are very, very non-violent. We tend to subscribe to the ethic, 'All persuasions, no violence.' Violence is shown as violent and no fun in our books."

"Nothing human disgusts me unless it's unkind or violent," Waller states.

"Reed has an erotic art book, essentially with the Omaha erotic art and his approach to erotic art, and he *apologizes* at the end for it being so vanilla," Worley laughs. "There are certainly people who engage in consensual activities that aren't my particular cup of tea, and extremely graphic violence I just don't find especially necessary unless you're dealing with a war comic. It personally bothers me. But as far as sexual activity, I just don't know for sure where I would draw the line. It has been pretty whitebread so far..."

"As far as sex and violence go," remarks Waller, "we really do have to talk about both of them together, because of the environment. Somebody said a while ago that they would prefer to see fun sex and unpleasant violence, rather than the other way around, which seems to be too much the case."

Worley admits, "We've shown some unpleasant sex that shows exploitation, but it's very clearly that, and we just don't want to confuse the two. Not to say that somebody couldn't have fun with bondage—we've used it as expression of extreme exploitation, but it doesn't have to be that. I think eventually, we will show the flip side of that, just because real-life normal people *can* enjoy it."

Although Waller and Worley want *Omaha* to expand into other media, including animation—and they've had a couple of nibbles—they aren't optimistic about the idea.

"In these times, I just can't imagine

(continued on page 60)

They find further animated adventure Australia way

By KYLE COUNTS

It's Friday afternoon at the Disney animation headquarters in Glendale, California. A reel from *The Rescuers Down Under*, the sequel to *The Rescuers* (1977) and Walt Disney Pictures' 29th animated feature, is being previewed by the film's co-directors/directing animators, Hendel Butoy and Mike Gabriel. As the silent footage unwinds, Butoy energetically spins a yo-yo, while Gabriel fills in patches of dialogue by imitating the characters' voices. Are these guys working in the right place, or what?

At this point, the film is 95 percent complete—all that remains is the final coloring and the recording of Bruce (*Silverado*) Broughton's score, which will take approximately two weeks. By the time the picture is released, it will have been some two-and-a-half years since Butoy and Gabriel began their work. Needless to say, each is looking forward to a well-deserved vacation.

Just why is a sequel to *The Rescuers* being made so many years after the original movie's release? Producer Tom Schumacher, who hails from a theatrical and dance background, explains it this way: "We call this a sequel because that's the language that people understand. But we like to think of it as 'the further adventures of,' like *The Thin Man* series. So, is it a *true* sequel? No, it doesn't pick up where the original story left off, where Penny was rescued and everything worked out.

"The motivation for this project was the characters of Bernard and Bianca. [Studio chairman] Jeffrey Katzenberg and [VP of animation] Peter Schneider wanted to bring them back, develop them further, and take them on another adventure. From a creative standpoint, it's great to take two established animated characters to the next step—Disney has never done that before."

Whatever the reasons for the sequel, Butoy and Gabriel are clear that they wanted to make a film that would stand proudly beside its predecessor. "When we came into the project, we really endeavored to make a film that would stand on its own," says Butoy. "In fact, when we're asked, 'How does it feel to do a sequel?,' we have to remind ourselves that it *is* a sequel. To us, it's its own separate entity. It takes place somewhere completely different with unique animals."

Butoy's interest in animation was sparked by seeing *Lady and the Tramp* at age 10. He began making his own Super-8 cartoons in high school, and enrolled at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in 1977, which he left after two years to join Disney as an in-betweener. Since that time, he has worked on *The Fox and the Hound*, *The Black Cauldron* (on which he animated Gurgi), *The Great Mouse Detective* (where he animated whole sequences, as well as Basil and Dawson) and *Oliver & Company* (where he handled Tito, the hyperactive chihuahua).

Mike Gabriel credits *Sleeping Beauty* with inspiring him to study animation. By age 18, he was knocking on the door, portfolio in hand, at the Disney animation department, but it wasn't until the late '70s that he was invited to join the company as an assistant on *The Fox and the Hound*. Like Butoy, he also worked on *The*

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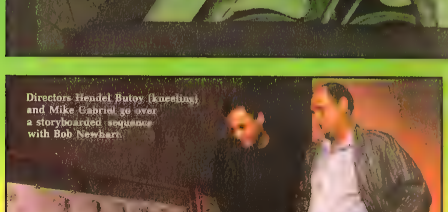

Directors Hendel Butoy [kneeling] and Mike Gabriel go over a storyboard sequence with Bob Newhart.

Black Cauldron, *The Great Mouse Detective* (designing the characters of Toby and Felicia) and *Oliver & Company* (for which he made significant contributions in character design, story and animation).

Out of their experiences on *Oliver & Company* came the opportunity to pull double duty on *The Rescuers Down Under*. In their independent meetings with Schneider, who asked them who among their cohorts they would most enjoy working with, each named the other.

"Mike and I didn't work that closely on *Oliver & Company*, we both had our own separate units," relates Butoy. "We did work together on *The Black Cauldron*, where we animated characters together. I don't think that was a consideration in putting us together as directors, though. I think that came out of both of our performances on *Oliver*, and the fact that we both respected each other's work."

Butoy and Gabriel came into *Rescuers Down Under* in April 1988, long after the idea for the sequel had been set. Already in place were the script by Jim Cox (who did rewrite work on *Oliver & Company*) and several months' worth of preliminary character designs by the development department. The first item of business for the team was to read the script and deliver notes to Cox to assist in his second draft. While the script was being retooled, work on the designs was halted.

"What we felt we needed to do, based on the script that we had and our previous experience as animators—was to simplify it by whittling down the number of characters in the story," notes Butoy. "Then, we took the script and made an outline of it on 3 x 5 cards, and divided it into acts, including a prologue and an epilogue. That gave us the opportunity to look at the story structure and play around with it. We mixed and matched, just like a puzzle, 'til we got it where we felt like we had a solid structure."

George C. Scott's voice for the poacher Percival McLeach was ideal. Notes Gabriel, "When this guy says he's going to do something mean, you believe him."

Even that structure continued to change as animation on the film proceeded. Storyboards were prepared from the script, and from that, story reels (the story in sketch form). Watching the reels was particularly helpful to the animators, as it allowed them to pinpoint timing and pacing problems, as well as any story elements lacking in clarity. Story supervisor Joe Ranft made further contributions, and writers Byron Simpson and Karey Kirkpatrick were brought in to write additional dialogue for the newly evolved characters. Ranft, Simpson and Kirkpatrick share final screenplay credit with Cox.

As to why the setting chosen was Australia, Gabriel says, "From what we heard, the film's original setting was Africa. They wanted an exotic locale, one with exotic animals. I forget why it was dropped, but Australia was considered the next best thing. It was purely the choice of the writer and the development people."

Could the Aussie flavoring have anything to do with the staggering success of Paul Hogan's *"Crocodile" Dundee* films? "It's absolutely true that in the 1980s, Australia became interesting to people," Schumacher agrees, "partly because Australia was pushing itself through tourism commercials. That led to the whole interest in Paul Hogan and his movies. So, this movie was put into development when there was a lot of new interest in Australia. If you're going to look for

Animator Ruben Aquino studies the expressions of Bernard and Bianca, voiced respectively by Bob Newhart and Eva Gabor.

a place in the world to set an adventure, what better place than one that has *already* piqued people's interest?

"Is there a connection between Hogan's 'Crocodile' Dundee and our character Jake? When you see the movie, I don't believe you'll think that there is. We went out of our way to make him different from Dundee, only because Dundee isn't very interesting. Dundee's way of confronting a mugger is to throw his arm up and have the guy's face run into his fist. Our character would have chased the mugger down the street, lassoed him and hung him from a tree. Jake is much more active than Dundee."

In working with the development artists to define the characters' final look, it was Butoy and Gabriel's idea to capitalize on the story's unique setting and animal life. Thus, aside from a golden eagle christened Marahute, the story features a frill-neck lizard named Frank; Red, a kangaroo; Krebbs, a koala bear; Sparky, a fly; and the adventurous kangaroo mouse, Jake. Villains-wise, there's a sneaky snake named Joanna, and her evil poacher owner, Percival McLeach, who traps endangered animals with the intent of selling them as material for coats, belts and handbags. The story concerns an 8-year-old Aussie boy named Cody who tries to interfere with McLeach's illegal operation.

To gain a better understanding of the film's locale, Butoy, Gabriel, Schumacher and art director Maurice Hunt made a two-and-a-half week journey through the Australian continent, assisted by Australian tour guide Craig Bolles, who did location scouting for the *"Crocodile" Dundee* films. "We felt we couldn't make a film about Australia without going there and seeing it," explains Butoy.

The odyssey began in Sydney, where Butoy and Gabriel "did a little voice casting," then on to Avre's Rock, "out in the middle of the country," and on to Alice Springs. The group took jeep rides through dried riverbeds, went canoeing down croc-filled rivers, hiked up breathtaking gorges, and took a midday plane ride over the canyons of Northern Australia.

For further inspiration, a goanna lizard was purchased so that the animators could observe its movements up close. A full-day trip to the San Diego Zoo allowed the

"Jake is much more active than Dundee," affirms producer Tom Schumacher, in the face of comparisons to another outback hero.

artists to sketch and video a gallery of snakes, emus, koala bears and kangaroos. A stuffed eagle was loaned from a museum for supervising animator Glen Keane to use for his work on Marahute, while Butoy, Gabriel and company paid two visits to Boise, Idaho, where Roy Disney, active in the preservation of birds of prey, arranged through the Peregrine Fund to have various birds loaned out so they could be videotaped for later use.

"I think what people expect from a Disney picture is integrity," Gabriel remarks. "If you look at *Bambi*, those deer were deer—you believed it. We would tell Glen Keane, 'If the eagle is absolutely realistic, it will be massively entertaining. Don't try to make it cartoonish, just capture its reality.' He captured it realistically, almost to a fault."

To ensure that the characters of Bianca and Bernard would be faithfully re-created, Butoy and Gabriel studied *The Rescuers* and dug out drawings from the 1977 film, which were photocopied for use by the artists as model sheets. "We didn't want them to look any different," says Gabriel. "They had to look exactly like they did in the first film. They were designed by brilliant designers, so why screw up a good thing?"

In truth, a few subtle modifications were made: Shadows were added to give the characters fullness, "colored lines"—lines that help define the character against a given background—were softened, and Miss Bianca was glamorized ever so slightly. "We have rouge on her cheeks in this film," smiles Gabriel, "and eye shadow. She looks gorgeous."

Gabriel agrees that, since *The Rescuers Down Under* has no song score like the first film, it must stand on the strength of its visuals. "Visuals are what this film is all about. That's what's gonna make it great. We were allowed to do a lot on this picture that gives it a real high-quality look."

Using computers, the artists created an amazingly realistic all-terrain vehicle called a Bushwacker. "It's state-of-the-art animation as far as non-character animation," continues Gabriel. "It has many, many moving parts, tank treads, dented doors—we made everything imperfect, because computers tend to make everything perfect.

"But we don't want to mislead people into thinking this is going to look different from [Disney's] other animated films. [The Bushwacker]

(continued on page 50)

While computers were employed to give a new dimension to the Rescuers' latest exploits, it was animator Glen Keane who created the realism of the golden eagle Marahute.

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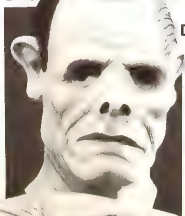

D

A.

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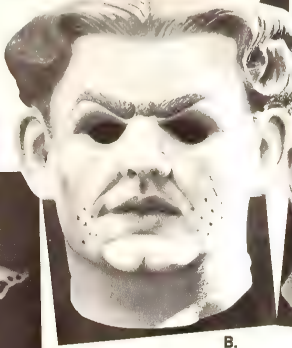
DICK TRACY

GREMLINS 2



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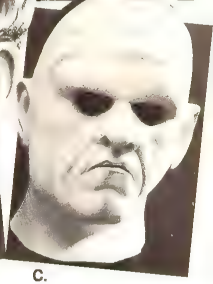

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A.

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Rescuers

(continued from page 48)

looks like the traffic in *Oliver & Company*, which also used computer animation. Hopefully, you won't even know a computer got near this film. The way a computer works best is when it's transparent."

Computers also helped give the film a depth that harkens back to the studio's early animated classics. "We sort of reinvented the multi-plane effect," says Gabriel. Adds Butoy, "What we wanted to do was bring that look back, to use more of that [technique] in this film than any other film where it has been used."

"The most insulting thing somebody can say to an animator is, 'Your work looks flat,' " offers Gabriel. "But when they say, 'Boy, it has such depth, it felt like I could move right through it,' that's almost the highest compliment you can get. That kind of depth is what made Disney great. Animation is strictly a visual medium, and anything you can add to a shot to make it more interesting, exciting and realistic, you do."

Computers notwithstanding, Butoy admits that *The Rescuers Down Under* is less about advances in the art form than making use of "many of the old techniques and finding ways to use them so that the quality and production value is still there. The most important technique is still imagination."

For Gabriel, the standout sequence in *Rescuers Down Under* is what he calls "the flight sequence"—where Cody frees Marahute from one of McLeach's traps. "The eagle befriends the boy and takes him on a flight through these giant cumulus clouds over Australia. The bird drops the kid and catches him again, then he'll let Cody's feet dangle to the point where he can drag them through the clouds. There's a magical moment where they go down to a river, and the kid waterskis as the bird pushes him along, then he jumps off a waterfall..."

"Things that every kid would love to do," interjects Butoy. "That *we* would love to do. I would love to be able to fly."

When Butoy and Gabriel talk of the actors who lent their vocal talents to *The Rescuers Down Under*, for once tell they consider theirs a dream cast. Not only do Eva Gabor and Bob Newhart return as Miss Bianca and Bernard, but they managed to entice George C. Scott (in a rare cartoon role) to play human bogeyman Percival McLeach. As an added highlight, John Candy is on hand as Wilbur, the albatross pilot, brother to *The Rescuers*' Orville.

"John was a phenomenal asset to the film," notes Gabriel. "He came in each day with an experimental attitude about the dialogue. He's a situation comic, so he knew how to milk each situation for more than what was on paper—he would throw in an aside that was funnier than the written line. We would often end up using the aside because it was genuine, it was fresh, and it was sincere."

As for George C. Scott, "We couldn't have hoped for a better voice for McLeach," says Butoy. "He brought so much to the character. Initially, we picked another actor for the role, but his reading was too much over-the-top. When we tried George, he played it a little more subtle and subdued, but he still had that power."

"We did tremendous work on trying to make McLeach a great villain," adds Gabriel. "A good villain is a villain you're afraid of, who comes across as really dangerous. George C. Scott's a great actor. I don't know if animation has ever had a character with as much subtlety and nuance and depth. When this guy says he's going to do something mean, you believe him."

General Hospital's Tristan Rogers is Jake, who becomes Bianca and Bernard's guide in the Outback. Adam Ryen won the role of Cody over some 50 other hopefuls. Gabriel praises Ryen, who is actually of Norwegian descent, as having a "charming, endearing quality. He's going to be very popular."

Cody was conceived originally as an aboriginal boy from the Outback, and was to have a tie with certain aboriginal legends. But after viewing the story reels, Butoy and Gabriel felt that the emphasis on Cody's background shifted the tale's focus away from the film's true heroes, Miss Bianca and Bernard. Rather than go "halfway" with the aboriginal theme, the duo decided to turn Cody into a "rugged" Australian youth from the Outback.

Just another in a long line of generic cartoon protagonists for the studio? Perhaps. But Gabriel prefers to think of Cody as serving a critical function within the film's framework.

"Believe me, any animator who is assigned to draw a human [protagonist] wants to give the character a uniqueness," says Gabriel. "But if you try to make him too different—say, by giving him a physical characteristic, like a big nose or a limp—you don't end up gaining much.

"What we told Russ [Edmonds, who was assigned to draw Cody] was that there should be a blandness to Cody in his look and performance. He's the 'door' to the audience, he's the character who brings the audience into the film with him. Russ' only job, I told him, was to make Cody sincere; the audience should believe that he's a real boy. That helped him get over that hurdle of 'How can we do something *different* with him?' "

The major challenge that Hendel Butoy, Mike Gabriel and company will have to weather is the comparison to the original *Rescuers*. Gabriel, however, isn't worried. "That film was made at a stage in the studio's history where they were cutting back on high production values. It was simply great animation and great characters. We have those same characters, so we have great characters, and we have better visuals because we have better equipment and more money to do them with. It's intimidating, yeah, but not as intimidating as being compared to *The Little Mermaid* and every other great film Disney has made."

Might there be another installment of *The Rescuers* somewhere down the line? Offers producer Tom Schumacher, noncommittally, "What Bianca and Bernard do for a living, working for the Rescue Aid Society, means that there will always be another adventure for *The Rescuers*—their story never ends. Which is *not* to say there *will* be another *Rescuers*."

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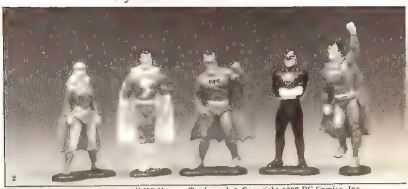
Heroes in Toyland

Comics folks are taking over a mall near you.

By EDDIE BERGANZA

1

Chess Photo: Courtesy Gallo Pewter Sculptures



2

Die-cast Photo: Courtesy ERTL

All DC Heroes: Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics, Inc

All Marvel Heroes Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group

Comics fans are a serious and collecting-conscious lot. Come the holidays, gifts must be chosen wisely or (shudder) be returned. Thus, to ease this burden, COMICS SCENE has compiled a list (check it twice) of a fraction of the bagfuls of comic book and animation-related merchandise that is (and will be) available. It should make Santa's helpers' job a little easier.

3

1

Gallo Pewter Sculptures has the 50th Anniversary Captain America Chess Set for sophisticated comics fans to conduct their own Secret Wars, pitting (front row) the Hulk (rook), She-Hulk (queen), Captain America (king), Punisher (bishop), Spider-Man (knight) and Wolverine (pawn) against the evil forces of the Green Goblin (knight), White Queen (queen), Dr. Doom (king), Red Skull (bishop), Dr. Octopus (rook) and Sabretooth (pawn). This handcrafted, numbered edition retails for $400.

4

3

Tracy Photo: Courtesy Playmates

2

Whether for use in DC role-playing games or just for looking nice on the comics shelf, ERTL (makers of last year's various sized Bat-vehicles) has released 10 2" to 3" die-cast superhero figurines. Supergirl will most likely become a collector's item due to her current comic status.

3

Playmates also offers the Dick Tracy line, which will be emphasizing the police and gangster vehicles this season as the Touchstone film hits the video stores.

4

It wouldn't be an Xmas list without the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. For parents and others rummaging through one toy aisle after another looking for that elusive figure (usually April), there are currently about 44 different figures (among the latest is Dave Garcia's Panda Khan and a parody of Batman & Robin, Wignut & Screwloose) to worry about. Expect even more figures to debut from Playmates, with the second Turtles movie. New vehicles are the Turtlecopter, Mutant Module and Technodrome.

Panda Khan: Trademark & Copyright 1990 David Garcia
Turtles Material: Courtesy Playmates

6

Photo: Courtesy Kenner/Copyright 1990 Columbia Pictures

5

Games Photo: Courtesy Acclaim Entertainment

5

Publishers fear that they're losing readers to computer games, but you can score points by giving someone the *X-Men* and *Punisher* games for the Nintendo Entertainment System or *The Amazing Spider-Man* for Game Boy from LJN.

6

The Ghostbusters keep busting. Having added Louis Tully to the line-up, Kenner will release a new set of Ecto-geo glow-in-the-dark figures in February.

7

If action figures are your game, then look to Toy Biz for their collection of DC and Marvel heroes and villains, which come with separate playsets and other accessories like the Batcycle, an electronic Batmobile (that makes four different noises) and Spider-Man's roadster.

8

While visiting the Universal Studios Florida in Orlando, the Westside Pavilion in LA or the Del Amo Fashion Center in Torrance, CA, you may wish to stop at the new Hanna-Barbera Stores to pick up some stone-age, space-age or Yogi Bear-type gift. More of these shops, similar to the existing Disney Stores, will be opening throughout the country.

9

When Kenner acquired the Beetlejuice license, there was no cartoon show, so most of the toys were based on the film. After two seasons of the cartoon, the ghost with the most will no longer ride alone as Lydia, Jacques LaLeane and the Monster Across the Street join the fun.

Heroes Material: Courtesy Toy Biz

Photo: Copyright 1990 Hanna-Barbera Productions, Inc.

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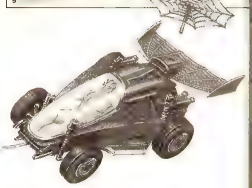


The screen to the Punisher game.

A

From out of the marsh and into the toy stores by early '91 are the Swamp Thing figures. Kenner has included accessories that will allow the figures (four versions of Swampy, a Dr. Arcane and six Unmen) to change form. Vehicles will also be available; Swamp Thing's will be organic. Arcane's favors the mechanical.

B

Batman is able to command two figure licenses. Kenner's goes along with the film's attitude that Batman's costume can be changed by offering a variety of multi-colored caped crusaders. A special Crime Master Edition will be released aimed at collectors. But don't expect many more variations on the Joker (only one new figure is being added) or other villains, since research has shown kids will play with a multitude of Batmen but only one Joker. Girl figures sell even worse, so sorry, *no* Vicki Vale.

C

They're a couple of dolls, named Kei and Yuri, from the Japanimated series, *The Dirty Pair*, (based on the novels of Haruka Takachido and also seen in the Eclipse Comics mini-series) distributed to comics shops by Diamond Hobbies and Toys—makers of the Hulk, Batman, Wolverine and, currently in production, Phoenix model kits. Measuring over 10", the Lovely Angels come with accessories not found on any Barbie doll.

D

Storm and Captain Britain are added to PVC action figures as are Black Panther, She-Hulk, Mr. Fantastic, Silver Surfer, Magneto and the hot Ghost Rider.

E

Boxer Rebellion gives a full menu to the phrase "Eat my shorts!" Aside from this animated apparel, look for boxers bearing the Marvel heroes.

F

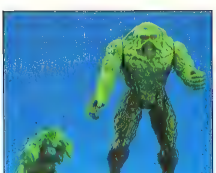
For the true patriot, the Marvel Collection offers this Captain America limited edition bisque.

G

Of course, you can always give comic books (and magazine subscriptions) for the holidays (see throughout for that wide assortment). This quite timely Classics Illustrated adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is by Joe Staton.

H

It's not a toy and makes for a messy collector's item, but why not leave this treat based on Mark Schultz's *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* for Santa?

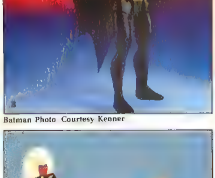


A

Swamp Thing Photo: Courtesy Kenner

B

Batman Photo: Courtesy Kenner



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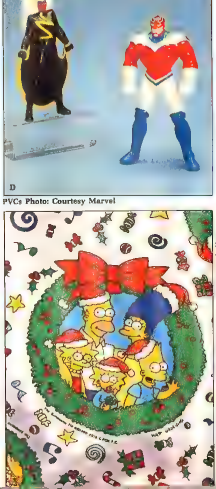
PVCs Photo: Courtesy Marvel



E

Photo: David Hutchison/Shorts: Courtesy Boxer Rebellion

C

Kei & Yuri Dolls: Courtesy Horizon

Photo: David Hutchison

G

Classics Cover Art: Gore Shuman/Copyright 1990

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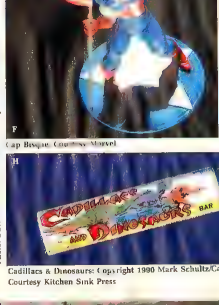
F

Cap Bisque. Courtesy Marvel



H

Cadillacs & Dinosaurs: Copyright 1990 Mark Schultz/Candy Courtesy Kitchen Sink Press

Photo: David Hutchison

Burlesquics Photo: Courtesy Kenner/Copyright 1990 The Geffen Film Company Simpsons Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1990 20th Century Fox

Bringing Up Bart

Story Editor Jon Vitti reveals how difficult it is to get "The Simpsons" to behave.

By PAT JANKIEWICZ

The big thing from the beginning has been to preserve the emotional reality of the characters," says Jon Vitti, the boyishly enthusiastic story editor of *The Simpsons*. "Even though they're cartoon characters, if you insult them, they get mad. It's not the sort of TV give-and-take where somebody is called much worse than you would ever say to a real person, and they just go about their business."

Relaxing in his office on the 20th Century Fox lot, it's not hard to think about the Simpsons, as the bug-eyed, buck-toothed bunch are all around the room in the form of dolls, posters, pictures and cels. "I kind of appreciate going somewhere and *not* seeing a Simpsons poster," he jokes.

"My first assignment on the show was to pitch five story ideas, and out of those, one got reworked into the 'bachelor party' show and another into the 'genius school' show. Our lead time is tremendous, so there are always seven months of crossing our fingers and hoping some other show doesn't do our ideas once we write them up. It *has* happened!"

Has the Fox Broadcasting Company ever "had a cow" over the series' outrageous antics? "The network has never really given us any trouble about what we can or can't do," Vitti states. "We get censorship notes, but most of them are about words or small scenes, they've never come down on the stories in general. The most trouble we had was Bart going to a mud-wrestling club. Just him being in the outside chamber—we didn't even have him in the club! Fox really wanted us to cut that scene. We just went ahead and did it, and more or less dared them not to air it.

"We give things back to them, though," he concedes, "if they're not important to the story and Fox is really upset about them. Like Homer's words, he's always walking the line of obscenity. In one show this year, he's trying to make a fire, we had him say, 'Screw this!' and throw it down. It's not an obscene reference, but that's where its origins are. They've also tried to have Bart not say, 'Hell,' but we felt kids know the word, say the word, and it wouldn't change the world to have Bart say it."

The show's writers, the story editor points out, regulate themselves. "Many times, there will be discussions within the group about whether something's in good taste or a good idea. We have a story this season where Bart fancies himself a dare-devil, and starts doing tricks on his skateboard. We had a discussion, 'Is this going to make kids copy it?' and took out several jokes that you could do on cartoons, but would actually encourage kids to do dangerous stuff. We did that ourselves."

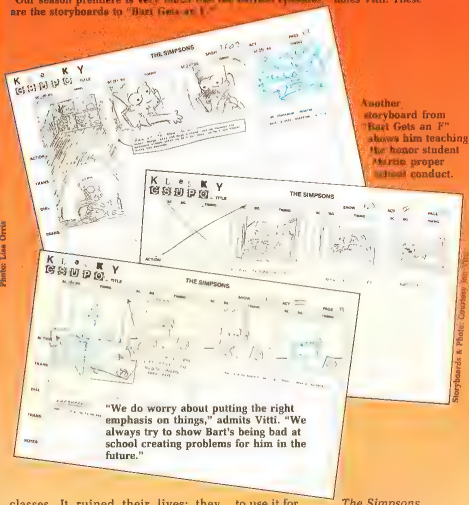
Being a story editor isn't much different than being a writer. Says Vitti, "The show works like this: Sam [Simon] and Matt [Groening] supervise everything, Mike [Reiss] and Al [Jean] supervise the script process with Jim Brooks, and everybody else is a writer.

"We write scripts after table readings and just before them, then we go into a room and rewrite them line by line. Everybody has something in every script. It's easier and less confusing to have one name on *every* script, but it's much more of a group process than you would think from just watching the credits. The show is a team effort."

Photo: Lisa Orvis

"We're trying not to fall back on old reliable gags; that sort of thing tends to make a show burn out quickly," adds Jon Vitti. "The all-time model is *Batman*."

"Our season premiere is very much like the earliest episodes," notes Vitti. These are the storyboards to "Bart Gets an F."



Another storyboard from "Bart Gets an F" shows him teaching the honor student Martin proper school conduct.

Storyboards & Photo: Courtesy Jon Vitti

"We do worry about putting the right emphasis on things," admits Vitti. "We always try to show Bart's being bad at school creating problems for him in the future."

Of the episodes he has written, does Vitti have a favorite? "I would have to say 'Bart the Genius' is still my favorite. I started out writing a list of everything bad Bart could do, and what would happen if he did it."

While the episode, about Bart cheating on an intelligence test, is hilarious, the writer based it on a real-life event that isn't funny at all. "It's kind of a sad story. There were some kids in my class as smart as any of the rest of us. In sixth grade, we were given intelligence tests.

"These guys just didn't take it seriously; they were writing their names in the bubbles and drawing Christmas trees. The next year, in junior high school, they were in all the stupid classes. It ruined their lives; they were knocked years behind the rest of us. We thought they were really cool when they were doing it, but we were actually watching them wreck their lives. So, when it came to using that, it was obvious Bart was already stupid, so I had to stand it on its head to use it for *The Simpsons*.

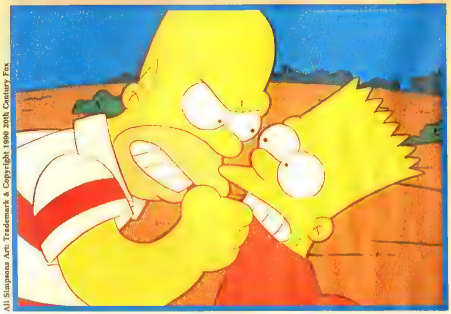
"My favorite show overall was the bully show ["Bart the General"], written by John Schwartzenhelder. With its third act, its cinematic nature of jumping from scene to scene, and references to other movies, it was not only really funny, but it was also a jumping-off point for many things done on the series. It laid the groundwork for the visual things we've done ever since."

Every show doesn't come off perfectly. "The most troublesome show was the one that became our last episode last season, the babysitter episode. It was supposed to be our premiere. It still has traces of the technical problems in it. There was a director on the original team who had a really different philosophy of animation. It was fine for other shows, but he insisted on trying it on *The Simpsons*.

"That's why we premiered in January instead of October," the story editor grimly notes. "One show came back with *50%* unusable footage; I heard it cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in retakes. Animation is cheap if done very simply.

"There's a little suspense when the show goes off to Korea to be animated," Vitti admits. "Because the

"Herman Munster is closer to Homer than Fred Flintstone is," asserts Vitti.



All Simpsons Art: Trademark & Copyright 1990 20th Century Fox

"We would be perfectly happy if comics fans watched us, then switched to *The Flash*," says Vitti.

last step we see is white on black drawings with key poses of the characters. There are many problems you can't catch at that stage, and the first time you see them, they're completely drawn out, hundreds of frames, and there's nothing you can do about them. Klasky Csupo, the people who do our animation, do a wonderful job. We're lucky to have them."

Kent Butterworth (CS #16), a director of several episodes, felt that the show is handled more like a sitcom than a cartoon. "I think the writing process is exactly like a sitcom," Vitti observes. "The one difference is that you don't have run-throughs with the cast, making it easier for time. Other than that, the writing process is *identical* up until we send off the script, then it becomes exactly like a cartoon show. It's a real split.

"It's much more fun to write a cartoon," he continues. "It's going to be a very sad day when I have to write live-action again. The flexibility of cartoons is so great. The way you can structure the stories, you don't have to do these long five-minute living room scenes with people sitting on a couch, which you have to do for money reasons when writing live action. With five minutes of cartoon footage, it's just as easy to have 12 scenes as three.

"The scriptwriting process [on this show] is usually pretty lonely. You're writing the script by yourself, with notes from other people. I have my notebook of jokes for the story that got pitched out. There will occasionally be a script like the exchange student show, where we just wrote it in the room from scratch. It's usually a pretty loose room, we tend to waste a lot of time talking about stuff other than *The Simpsons*."

Voices are one of *The Simpsons*' special strengths. "We've been very fortunate with the show's cast. We got Dan Castellaneta, the voice of Homer, because they wanted to use *Tracy Ullman Show* cast members. It's interesting. They take shots at each other's characters. Harry [Shearer] can do Homer, Dan's character, and Dan can do a pretty good Mr. Burns, Harry's character, but nobody else can do Bart. It's a physically amazing voice."

Behind every good underachiever, the writer reveals, there is a woman. "Bart's done by a woman named Nancy Cartwright. She ad libs a lot of lines for Bart, and knows him inside and out. Nancy has contributed a lot to the character. The voice takes precedence in animation," he states. "We make it sound funny, and then have the pictures match that."

The writers, though, had no idea that Bart's favorite lines of dialogue would be coming out of nearly every viewer's mouth. "The Bart catch phrases were *never* meant to be catch phrases!" he insists with a grin. "They've become that on their own. I wrote 'Eat my shorts!' in 'Bart the Genius,' and that's the *only* time he ever said it on the show.

"We didn't think of it as a catch phrase, yet it turned up in many weird places. *TV Guide* had 'Bart to Cosby: Eat my shorts,' the *Enquirer* used it, and I think there's even a T-shirt. We try not to make Bart inhumanly clever, so many of his phrases like 'Don't have a cow, man,' already exist. We were just trying to portray what kids would *really* say."

Some references are actually a bit closer to home. Members of Vitti's family are "afraid I'm going to put them in it. Every time any little detail works its way in, like the couch being held up by a dictionary, it's either a very happy or somewhat annoyed reaction. "My brother used to take pictures of his rear end, and that made its way onto the show, so he was very proud that his old pastime had gotten on television! I have occasional references, like a cousin who spends way too much money on lottery tickets. I use different people for different things. My brother tends to be Bart, my cousin tends to be Homer."

(continued on page 60)

" 'Bart the Genius' is still my favorite," confesses Vitti of the episode he wrote based on a sad childhood experience.

RED, WHITE & HEROIC

Matt Salinger is the mind behind the stars and stripes.

"The big challenge was making Steve Rogers believable and letting the audience into the person and the conflict he's going through," says Salinger.

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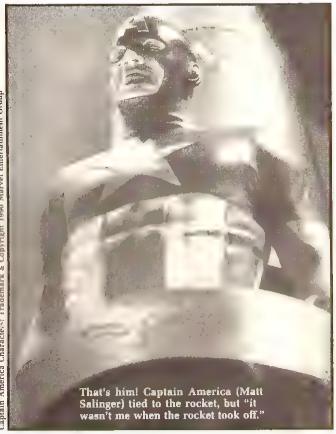

That's him! Captain America (Matt Salinger) tied to the rocket, but "it wasn't me when the rocket took off."

Captain America Character ™ Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group

The first thing Albert Pyun told Matt Salinger after awarding the actor the role of Captain America was that "you had better get in training." Salinger took his advice and began working out and pumping up in Los Angeles' famed Gold's Gym. It was on that first day that Salinger received an odd bit of encouragement.

"I was lifting some weights when my trainer came by and said, 'There are these stomach exercises that Sylvester Stallone always uses and when you're really in good shape, you'll be able to do them,' " recalls the actor. "My curiosity got the better of me and I tried them. I was able to do *two*. The day I finished my training, I did two sets of 35. When I mastered those Stallone moves, I started to really feel like Captain America."

Salinger hardly looks anything like Captain America during a late-morning conversation at his Santa Monica, CA home. Putting hammer and saw to wood, the soft-spoken actor (and son of famed author J.D. Salinger) is playing Mr. Fix-It on his newly acquired digs. The performer, who appears somewhat halting and uncomfortable with the interview process, is accommodating in detailing his *Captain America* odyssey. That's something he *wasn't* during actual lensing when one high-profile media outlet after another fell before his "no interview" policy.

"I'm not a Method actor who must stay in character all the time," explains Salinger of his previous silent service. "But talking about the character on the set while in costume would have forced me to step out of that character and look at him from a different point-of-view. I knew that would make me feel self-conscious and would be distracting, so I didn't do it."

By MARC SHAPIRO

But he's willing to do it now, although reluctant to consider this starring role as his big break.

"I'm not really comfortable with the idea of big breaks, but this would definitely be a major breakthrough for me. I've lost three films over the years where I had been the best actor for the job and the directors and producers wanted me. The problem was that distributors didn't think they could sell my name overseas. That's frustrating. So obviously, if *Captain America* does real well internationally, that's a problem I won't have again."

Salinger, an avid *Captain America* reader while growing up, had met director Pyun (CS #14) years previous and had remained good friends despite turning down Pyun's offer of a plum role in *Cyborg*. And so when the inevitable search for a Captain America type had gone from bodybuilder and football player types to real actors, Salinger put in his bid.

"I pretty much knew I had given the best first reading and Albert felt that I was the one for the role. But it turned out that there were some politics involved because, once again, I didn't have the name recognition that everybody wanted. But Albert really went to bat for me and convinced a whole lot of people that I was the one for the role."

However, Salinger's triumph quickly turned to doubt.

"I didn't want the part at first," he admits. "I was a little leery because many people have done these kinds of parts in the past and never worked again. I didn't want to end up being another Klinton Spilsbury [the actor who starred in *The Legend of the Lone Ranger*]. I've been around long enough so that people in the industry know me but the public really doesn't. I didn't want the public thinking I was just another one of those guys they found on the beach.

"But once I read the script, I changed my mind. I liked the humanity of Steve Rogers, the insecurity, the self-doubt and the sadness. I could tell he would be a very full, interesting character to play."

Salinger claims that, outside of taking another peek at the comics, he didn't do much research into playing the star-spangled avenger. What preparation he did do was mostly mental.

"I took the approach of looking into what was going on in his mind. There was something going on behind the red, white and blue, and I felt it was important that I lock onto it.

"Captain America isn't your typical superhero. He's like the guy who would win all the events in the Olympics. He may be extra-human but he's not superhuman. He's just this ordinary guy who has gone through this extraordinary experiment and is, physically and mentally, having to deal with a changed body and a changed life. The big challenge was making Steve Rogers believable and letting the audience into the person and the conflict he was going through. Playing Captain America, by comparison, was easy. Once you put on the costume and pick up the shield, it's not hard to feel like Captain America."

Salinger, however, felt the first time he put on the costume was important enough that when he did it, he wanted to be alone.

"It was very important that I not feel silly or stupid in it," he recalls of that fateful day, "and that I get the feeling that I was proud to be wearing it. Feeling good about being in the costume was the feeling I got. There was also a childlike spirit of excitement which I was glad to feel, because that lent itself to the naive, innocent side of Steve Rogers' character."

Any innocence Salinger might have had about the rigors of location shooting was dashed during the six weeks of filming in Yugoslavia.

"It was rough. I was in many scenes and, inside the latex and rubber suit, I was sweating off about five pounds a day. I wasn't acrobatic enough to do the flips, but that was me doing all the fights, running, jumping and hanging off the cliffs.

"And the scene where Captain America is tied to the rocket? That was me. Fortunately, it *wasn't* me when the rocket actually took off," Salinger laughs.

It was Salinger, during a hectic three-units-going-at-once filmathon in Dubrovnik, who found himself, quite literally, hanging around

"I was standing on a set, not really doing anything, when suddenly the stunt coordinator grabbed me and a camera and said, 'Let's go get that shot.' That shot was me, in a harness,

One scene between an aged Bernice (Kim Gillingham) and Cap (Salinger) was cut because audiences weren't happy seeing Cap with an older woman.

"I used to play Ultimate Frisbee in college," says Salinger. "So, I wound up throwing the shield during the entire movie."

dangling above the ocean about 200 feet in the air for a scene where I'm climbing a wall. They wanted that shot so everybody watching the movie would have the feeling of danger.

I know *I* had the feeling of danger," he laughs.

Unfortunately, the shot didn't make the film's final cut. Nor did a non-action sequence that Salinger describes as "the most compelling sequence in the film.

"It was the scene where I've come back to life in the '90s and confront a now very old Bernice in her kitchen. It was real emotional and Kim Gillingham [as Bernice] and I were literally in tears by the time we were finished. Unfortunately, when we had the test screenings, audiences seemed uncomfortable and confused with Captain America being with this older woman and just felt the film should get on with the action, so it had to go."

The action, which centers primarily on the struggles between Captain America and the Red Skull, got stronger and stronger as filming progressed, thanks in no small part to some ad-libbing first by actor Scott Paulin (who plays the Skull) and then by Salinger.

"Scott, at one point, began calling me his 'brother' which wasn't in the script but, given the similar backgrounds of the two, seemed to make sense. But when he continued to call me that, I, as Steve, began to get real annoyed," Salinger explains. "Finally, during the last battle, Scott knocked me down and called me his brother again and I came back with the line 'Stop calling me your brother, you S.O.B.!' and I leap up and punch him. So, if the final battle looks particularly heated and intense, it's because Scott and I had worked it to the point where it really *was*."

The actor recalls that not everything about making *Captain America* was "that exciting." There was the night he and the entire cast and crew slept in an airport lobby when they missed the last flight out. Ditto the stares Salinger got when he would walk down Yugoslavian streets in heroic attire. But things perked up during the sequences where Captain America flings his shield.

"I used to play Ultimate Frisbee in college," says the actor, "and so when Albert couldn't get any of the stuntmen to throw the shield with any kind of accuracy, I asked him to let me give it a shot. I was more accurate than anybody else so I wound up throwing it during the entire film.

"There was this one scene where Captain America has been knocked flat on his back, and there's this thug on a motorcycle coming toward him. Albert told me to just try and flip the shield as close as possible 'and we'll just fake the rest.' Well, I threw the shield overhand and it hit the motorcycle's front tire dead on! The stunt guy freaked out, the bike went down and the special FX shield wasn't even necessary."

Matt Salinger spent his early years in Vermont and New Hampshire, but it took a year abroad, studying mime in France, that sparked his interest in acting. Salinger returned to the States and

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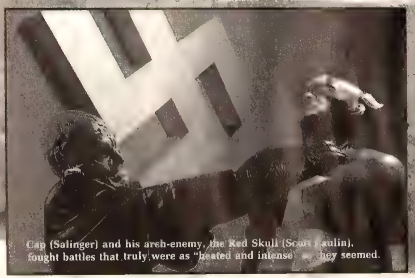


Cap (Salinger) and his arch-enemy, the Red Skull (Scott Paulin), fought battles that truly were as "heated and intense" as they seemed.

Salinger first tried the Captain America costume on alone, because "it was very important that I not feel stupid in it."

Simpsons

(continued from page 56)

Simpsons creator Matt Groening wasn't at all the sort of person the story editor thought he would meet, Vitti admits. "I had read all of his books before I had got here, and I didn't know what to expect because the cartoons are so intense. He's very much the opposite of that in person—he's a friendly, happy guy. It was a pleasant surprise, because, as neat as those cartoons are, you don't want to be working for a dark, brooding, angry guy.

"This year, he's really being run ragged because the merchandising has taken off. It's an impossible task, but he tries to make sure the licenses are handed out to people who won't try to completely exploit it. The talking Bart is my favorite. I've been holding out, hoping they would give me one for free, but I guess I'll have to buy one!"

But Vitti points out that the *Simpsons* producer also deserves a great deal of credit for the show's success.

"Sam Simon is really the most undermentioned guy in the series. He's completely hands-on, line by line, writes a huge portion of every script, the structure and story pacing are largely his, but because there's no book of Sam Simon cartoons you can read, people don't really respond to the name."

Vitti can't stress the producer's influence on the show enough. "He is the final guy for storyboards, scripts, soundtracks. He directs the recording sessions. Because of his background in 30-minute television with shows like *Taxi* and *Cheers*, Sam is always steering us out of stock TV situations."

The writer smirks good-naturedly. "Thanks to Sam, Bart will never be hypnotized, there will never be a show with Bart lying in a hospital bed with cut-in clips from old shows, and nobody will *ever* get amnesia and have to be reminded of what happened by cutting different episodes together!"

Some feel *The Simpsons* expresses contempt for Saturday morning cartoons, particularly with the Itchy and Scratchy cartoons that Bart watches. "On the one hand, we may be coming down on Saturday morning animation, but on the other, Itchy and Scratchy is our favorite part of the show," Jon Vitti remarks. "There's a love/hate relationship with cartoons. We love the Warner Bros./Popeye/Tex Avery cartoons, it's the state they're in today that bothers us."

Omaha

(continued from page 44)

it, because it's a tremendous investment of time and money," says Worley. "But I would love to see other people do it and do it well. Omaha's exquisite, she's a wonderful character with a great deal of charm and appeal. I would sure like to see it."

The pair are keeping busy with their own individual non-*Omaha* projects, as well. Worley is currently scripting Disney's *Roger Rabbit* comic (see sidebar), while her partner has come out with *The Erotic Art of Reed Waller*.

"It's a grab bag of stuff that has happened as a result of doing *Omaha* and developing a funny-animal approach to erotic art in general," he explains. "I also go on at extremely boring length about eroticism and aesthetics, but you don't have to read any of that. You can just look at the pictures!"

Many questions are going to be answered in the next issues of *Omaha*, confesses Worley. "They mystery of what happened to Maria, Chuck's mother, and why she has been afraid, and what actually happened between her and Charlie. Her story may, in fact, take an issue in itself. It deserves one; it's an interesting story.

"The mystery of who killed Bonner is only going to get more complicated for a while. And Omaha is back dancing, so we're going to explore her life as a dancer more than we've been able to in recent issues. I don't know how fast her and Chuck's relationship is going to sort itself out, or exactly how it will, but it's going to be interesting. She's going to have a different perspective on it," says Worley. "We're going to be a little critical of certain aspects of the feminist movement as well.

"Right about the time I started doing *Omaha*, I had been doing volunteer work at a women's center, and I had many friends on the anti-pornography task force," she reveals. "I had a *lot* of trouble making up my mind about doing the job, but now, I'm very proud of what I'm doing. I don't apologize to anyone."

Although continuity between comics characters and their creative teams is the exception today rather than the rule, Waller and Worley wouldn't mind working on *Omaha* for the next five or 10 years.

"I can't imagine at this point not wanting to continue to do it," says Kate Worley.

"I'll never get tired of doing *Omaha*," says Reed Waller. "I can't really imagine ever being burnt out on her!"

Grant

(continued from page 23)

GRANT: No, it was always intended to be an Epic book. John and I had already written one installment by the time Mike got sick and everyone was very excited. But by the time Mike got better, we reread it and realized the story had dated incredibly, so we decided to revamp it, make it more realistic. Having rewritten the first part, we're much happier with it than ever before. It has a real anti-war theme.

CS: Since it has taken so long, people have probably forgotten the premise.

GRANT: It's set 20 years from now and there has been a war that has decimated part of the world and destroyed America. There's this one guy who's in a cryogenic bunker and is basically charged with putting America to right again. In a way, it was conceived as another slant on Judge Dredd, tailored specifically for the American market.

CS: One thing we haven't discussed so far is how you got into comics in the first place. You were originally working as a writer for DC Thompson, the old British comics company, weren't you?

GRANT: That's right. How I got into writing *Judge Dredd* was through the fact I had known John for several years, and to a lesser degree, Pat Mills, because we had all worked together at DC Thompson, home of those British institutions *The Dandy* and *The Beano*, years ago in Dundee in the late '60s. I was writing teenage comics, romantic fiction, if you can believe it. Then, I burnt out writing.

To cut a long story short, I ended up doing many odd jobs and found myself living in dire poverty.

CS: What turned it around?

GRANT: I got a telegram from John Wagner out of the blue asking me to join him and Pat Mills on a science fiction comic, which turned out to be *2000 A.D.* They were working freelance and were so busy they needed someone else to help out. So, just when I really needed it, the call came through. Well, telegram. I was so poor at the time I didn't even have a telephone.

CS: Weren't you and John sharing a house for a while?

GRANT: Right. And that's how we ended up working on Dredd together.

CS: So, you started out writing teenage romance stories and ended up writing *Batman*.

GRANT: Amazing, isn't it? Here's this bloke from Scotland writing one of the bestselling comics in the world, shaping the destiny of an American icon.

CS: Life is strange.

GRANT: You're not kidding.

A VOICE SWEET AS CANDY

Disney animators modeled the Indian Chief from *Peter Pan* after Candy Candido's voice.

Whether Fidget the Bat, Crocodile Constable or Indian Chief, Candy Candido is still enjoying vocal delights.

By JIMMIE HOLLIFIELD II

A half century ago, Candy Candido was called to the Disney studio to record his voice in a project called *Dinosaurs*. Along with eight other men, he rumbled and roared for several hours the way he thought dinosaurs should sound. The logic was that anything went for a dinosaur's voice, because there were no experts on how tyrannosaurus rex vocalized.

After several hours of work, Candido picked up his check and left the studio, never again to see or hear of that project. One theory is that the animators used the recording as an inspiration for animating the brilliant "Rite of Spring" segment of *Fantasia*. Set to Igor Stravinsky's music, the piece illustrates prehistoric dinosaur life.

Even if his "lost role" didn't contribute to *Fantasia*, Candido feels that the 1940 classic is one of the greatest representations of Walt Disney's talent as an artist and a producer. "One of the finest Disney ever did," he reflects. "It proves that he was a mental giant."

Today, Candy Candido is regarded as one of the last great animation voice artists. His animation career spans 50 years. Unlike some performers who voice animated characters, Candido never had to train to achieve his unique vocal style; he was born with it.

That happened in New Orleans on Christmas Day, 1913. At age six, he had the most unusual voice of anyone his age—bass. His parents were worried and decided to send him to specialists to remedy the problem. Some experts advised that an operation would correct his impediment, while others said that in time, his voice would change. The latter were correct, because at age eight, Candido's voice changed *again*, enabling him to speak in soprano, alto, tenor *and* bass! Years later, tests proved his vocal range to be six and a half octaves, one of the widest in the world.

His condition puzzled his parents, so they enrolled him in a school of elocution. Students participated in school plays to give them better control over their voices. During a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, Candido was playing the role of Peter the servant, when the performers playing Juliet and the Nurse forgot their lines. Seizing the opportunity, Candido played all three roles, using three different vocal ranges, sending his audience into convulsions of laughter.

Having fallen in love with show business, Candido turned to musical pursuits. "When I was 10 years old, my mother bought me a bass fiddle. I had an uncle who played bass fiddle with the New Orleans Symphony who taught me to play." A year later, Candido organized a six-piece dixieland band. Another member was Louis Prima, who later voiced King Louie in Disney's *The Jungle Book*.

At age 16, Candido fell in love with Anita, a fiddle player in his band. He decided that if he had a well-paid job, he could marry her.

Candido and his Bourbon Street partner Otto "Coco" Heimel traveled to California where they auditioned for a popular singer of the day, Gene Austin. Austin hired the pair, so

Detective Art: Copyright 1988 The Walt Disney Company Peter Pan Art: Copyright 1990 The Walt Disney Company

All Disney Art: Courtesy Frank Lomento/Walt Disney Studios

Candido and his new wife went to New York to record hit songs.

In 1933, Austin took his trio to Hollywood to appear in musical parts in pictures. Candido says that if he hadn't appeared in the movies, he probably wouldn't have ended up in the animation business.

However, Candido grew angry with Austin when he learned that the singer was making $5,000 a week, while Candido's raise gave him a mere $35 weekly. He left Austin and joined Ted Fio Rito, a big band giant.

In his eight years with Fio Rito, Candido recorded musical hits like "On the Good Ship Lollipop" and "Lulu's Back in Town."

In 1935, he appeared in *Roberta*, dancing and singing with Fred Astaire. Other roles followed: *Only Angels Have Wings*, *Something to Sing About* and *Cowboy from Brooklyn*.

In 1939, while he was with Fio Rito's band (which he left in 1941), he was hired by MGM to provide voices for *The Wizard of Oz*. Using his low tones, Candido voiced one of the talking apple trees Dorothy encounters while traveling on the Yellow Brick Road.

"*The Wizard of Oz* was one of the best films ever made. It's a classic. *Mary Poppins* and *Wizard* are, in fact, my favorite pictures. That was so long ago, I can't remember the lines. I know I got $65 for doing that voice, though."

After Candido quit the music business, his wife Anita wanted him to stop traveling and find work closer to home. At her urging, Candy Candido drove a mile from his home to the Disney Studios to try voicing animated characters.

"As I walked into the casting director's office, he yelled, 'Hey, Candy Candido!' I said, 'How do you know my name?' He said, 'My name's Jack Lavin, and I used to manage a musician named Paul Whiteman, and we tried to hire you from Ted Fio Rito, but he wanted $25,000 for your contract. What are you doing here?'

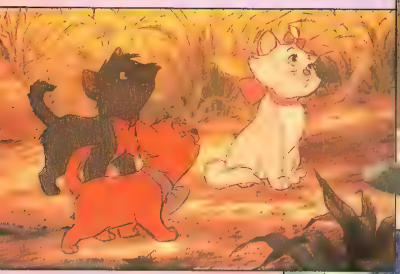
"So, I said, 'Here's the green sheet. You're looking for some different cartoon voices.' He said, 'Can you do a raven?' Well, I thought the guy was pulling my leg! What did I know about a raven? So, I figured if he could pull my leg, I could pull *his*.

"I said, 'What do you want, the *male* or *female*?' He said, 'You mean, there are *two*?' I said, 'Sure, the female does all the talking! The male never does anything.' He said, 'Let's hear it!'

"So, from the top of my voice, I went, 'AAAWKK!' He took me to see a producer. Jack told him that I did a

"I enjoyed every trip Walt sent me out on," admits Candy Candido, here seen leaving the Disney animation department with animator Jack Bailey (left), Clarence Nash (Donald Duck's voice, far right) and friends.

As the cat's meow, Candido worked on *The Aristocats* and went to the dogs for *101 Dalmations*.



Taking direction from Walt Disney himself, Candido voiced Maleficent's goons in *Sleeping Beauty*.

Aristocats Art: Copyright 1970 The Walt Disney Company

Photo: Copyright Walt Disney Productions/Courtesy Candy Candido

The Indian Chief in *Peter Pan* remains one of Candido's favorite Disney characters. One reason he likes the part is the fact that Disney animators closely watched him as they recorded the voice. "You know, when you see the Indian Chief, he's fat. I'm not fat. And he's real tall, and I'm kinda short. But you notice he looks like me. Also, he has the same dark eyebrows, and he plays with his hands like I do when I perform."

The Indian Chief does indeed appear to mirror his voice counterpart. The Disney animators perfectly captured Candido's habit of twiddling his thumbs while he performs. Disney historians maintain that this character is one of the best examples of how the animators occasionally modeled characters after their voices.

Another reason Candido cites the Indian Chief as one of his favorites is the song, "What Makes the Red Man Red?" written by Sammy Cahn and Sammy Fain. "When I recorded it, I sang it with 10 bass singers from around Los Angeles. And if you hear the song, you'll notice my bass voice is almost twice as low as theirs.

"*Peter Pan*, I wish I could have done more of those. I enjoyed doing the picture immensely. And one of my best friends was on that picture, Hans Conried, the voice of Captain Hook. What a performer he was. There will never be another classic like *Peter Pan*."

For *Lady and the Tramp*, Candido meowed and purred with Peggy Lee as the Siamese cats. From there, he went to *Sleeping Beauty*. "Well, I'll never forget. I was recording Maleficent's goons. I was going to do each goon separately, but Walt came

Dalmatians Art: Copyright 1960 The Walt Disney Company

The voice artist spent only "about two or three hours" making *101 Dalmatians*.

female raven, and that the male never talked. The producer looked at me and asked to hear it. I did it again, 'AAAWKK!' He took off his glasses, looked at me, looked at the two animators in the room, and said, 'I'll buy that!' So, that's how I came to work at Disney."

Candido quickly formed a friendship with Walt Disney. He remembers Disney with respect. "What a wonderful man he was. He had a thing going at the studio; everybody was on a first name basis. He would walk down and say, 'Hello, Candy!' and I would say, 'Hello, Walt!' Simple as that. And we had lunch together lots of times."

The first film that actually used what Candido had recorded was *Dumbo*. "In *Dumbo*, I did wild animal voices. I did hoofbeats and noises of the elephants walking."

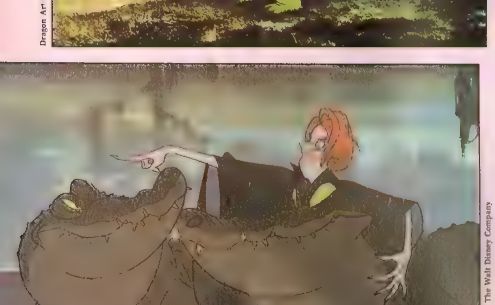
In 1950, Candido recorded again for Disney in *Cinderella*. Again, the parts were relatively minor, and he didn't receive credit for his work. He squeaked for the mice, and recorded little bits of dialogue for Gus-Gus along with famed Disney sound effects artist Jimmy MacDonald. He also supplied the chirps of Cinderella's bird friends. The bird roles were difficult for Candido, because those are the only voices he says that he doesn't do too well. He recalls that he left bird calls to his friend, the late Clarence "Ducky" Nash, the voice of Donald Duck. "Clarence did birds like you wouldn't believe. I would sit with him on his porch at his house up in Montrose, and he would whistle and warble and the porch would be covered with birds. He was that good."

Candy Candido, however, wanted juicier parts. Although he enjoyed squeaking, roaring and chirping, he was hoping that Disney would offer him a role with dialogue. He didn't have to wait long. Disney had begun his on-again/off-again adaptation of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. For a large, menacing and forbidding Indian Chief, Disney wanted a harsh sounding voice, and he chose Candido.

Sleeping Beauty Art: Copyright 1959 The Walt Disney Company

Dragon Art Copyright 1977 Jan Walt Disney Company

While Charlie Callas voiced Elliot, *Pete's Dragon*, Candido did all of the character's laughs, grunts and groans.



Rescuers Art Copyright 1977 The Walt Disney Company

***The Rescuers* "was a lot of fun," says Candido, who made the crocodile sounds.**

in and suggested, in fact, he *told* us, that he wanted me to do the main goon, then after that, rerecord, and do some sounds and mimic the first thing that I said. And he was right. It worked out great that way." Candido also did his "AAAWKK" again as the voice of Maleficent's raven.

In 1960, Disney hired Candido, who emceed and performed on numerous publicity tours for the studio, to lend his voice to a variation of a character he had recorded for MGM two decades earlier. For *Babes in Toyland*, Candido recorded his low bass tones as yet another talking tree, except this time he got to sing as well. And in 1961, he provided puppy voices for *101 Dalmatians*. "All I did was barking and yelping. I only worked for about two or three hours on that picture." And in 1970, he purred and meowed as kittens, for *The Aristocats*.

However, Candido didn't work exclusively for Disney. He is perhaps the only voice artist to do the voice of Popeye just *once*. "Years ago, they [the Fleischer Studio] called me to do a Popeye. I did the voice and they gave me $25. I wanted more than that, so I told my agent. He said, 'If you ask for more, they won't keep you.' But I didn't listen, so I asked for more and they replaced me. Which is kinda sad, because I did Popeye differently. Mine was the lowest sounding Popeye ever."

Candido also did voices in several Walter Lantz cartoons. One was in a series called "Walter Lantz Cartune Specials." "I don't remember what this particular one is called, but I voiced a little bird that comes out of a clock. Father Time lets him out. I didn't even see it. However, somebody called from Pennsylvania a few years ago and said that they saw it on TV. So, if anybody knows it, tell me about it."

In 1970, Candido joined perhaps the most seasoned and experienced group of voice artists ever assembled to do voices in an animated feature for Chuck Jones' *The Phantom Tollbooth*. The ensemble included Hans Conried, Mel Blanc, June Foray, Daws Butler and Les Tremayne.

"I just got a call for *The Phantom Tollbooth*," says Candido. "I went out to MGM, and I worked about four hours on it recording a character called the Great Din. June Foray was there recording too. I've worked with her a lot. In fact, many of those people that did voices on it have worked with me on commercials and different things."

In 1973, Candido was called by the Disney Studio to record again for *Robin Hood*. He voiced the Crocodile Constable as well as some unusual sound effects. He remembers, "Making *Robin Hood* was a lot of fun. I don't think anybody would know it, but I did a lot of bow and arrows in the archery tournament sequence. And I'll never forget how the director, Wolfgang Reitherman, one of Disney's 'Nine Old Men,' talked from behind the recording booth and yelled, 'Hey, Candy! Give me a long bow and arrow!' So, all of those swishing noises of the arrows are mine."

In 1977, Candido roared and growled as Madame Medusa's pet crocodiles, Nero and Brutus, in *The Rescuers*. "If you watch that picture again, I did a lot of real crocodile sounds in those voices, especially when my characters were trying to get those little mice, Bianca and Bernard, out of the organ pipes. I wish I had the storyboard from that scene."

Another Disney picture that used Candido's talents was *Pete's Dragon*. "Charlie Callas did all the high parts of Elliot the Dragon, but I did all the laughs, grunts and moans. I did a big scene when the bad guys throw the net over him. I had to make all kinds of weird sounds like Elliot was trying to get out."

Also around the same time,

{continued on page 66}

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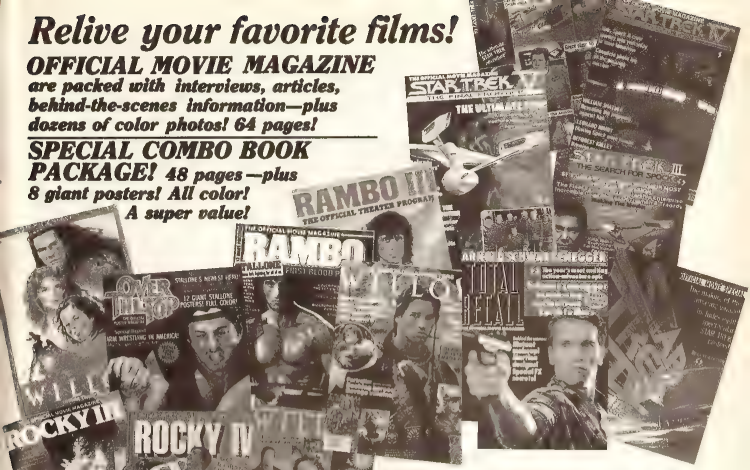

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Salinger

(continued from page 59)

continued his acting education at Princeton and Columbia University.

Salinger soon began appearing in a number of Off-Broadway productions and eventually graduated to the lead role in the award-winning *One Night at Studio*. He soon tested the film waters in such efforts as *Revenge of the Nerds* and Sidney Lumet's *Power*. It was during that outing that Salinger received his first taste of genre action.

"The writer William Gibson [STARLOG #145] had seen me in *Power* and had written to the producers who were attempting to get his novel *Neuromancer* made into a movie. He felt I would be perfect for the lead. He even went so far as to send me the book to read. Unfortunately, financing fell through and that film never happened."

Salinger remains optimistic about *Captain America*'s chances of finding a large audience. But his optimism, especially in light of the change in release date the numerous cuts in the film and the possibility the movie will *only* be released on video, is mixed with realism.

"It certainly *won't* be *Batman*," he says. "We had one-sixth their budget and a very limited shooting schedule. But I can't imagine this film *not* making money. And the reason is that *Captain America* has something for everybody."

Salinger is signed to do a second turn as Captain America should box office warrant it. He claims he will have script and director approval on a sequel and, in future outings, doesn't see Cap walking alone.

"The period of time that I read the comics always featured Captain America and the Falcon, and I think it would be fun to have the Falcon involved. There's much that's compelling about Captain America being a loner, but I don't think that would be sacrificed by giving him a partner."

Matt Salinger contemplates the question of the real world's problems and which ones an actual Captain America would tackle. He concedes that the real world has enough injustice to keep Captain America busy in numerous sequels.

"It's totally escapist to expect one person to solve everything. A real Captain America couldn't possibly solve all the world's problems by himself. He's just a symbol of how we have the power to work together to address problems. And by playing Captain America, I'm getting something out in me that would like to be part of that banding together and working for change."

Candido

(continued from page 64)

Candido recorded a voice for Ralph Bakshi's *Hey Good Lookin!*, but he doesn't really remember it.

He came back to Bakshi in 1987 to do various characters for *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse*. Working with Bakshi and Disney was quite a contrast. "Ralph Bakshi is very controversial, but boy, is he talented! He can draw! And he has a real sense of humor. I enjoyed working for him. Each time I would go there, he would give me the storyboard to read and I would do my part. For the *Mighty Mouse* shows, I've been getting great residuals from overseas. I wouldn't mind working for Ralph again."

During the slump that seriously affected the animation industry in the early 1980s, Candido didn't work much in animation. When, however, new management assumed control of Disney in 1984, a new animation department was formed under Roy Disney Jr., an old friend of Candido's. Candido naturally was called to do his biggest animation role ever, the part that got him the best reviews of his animation career: Fidget, the pegleged bat henchman of the evil Professor Ratigan in 1986's *The Great Mouse Detective*. The character stole the show.

However, Candido doesn't like the way the studio promoted the film, a factor that, in his opinion, prevented the picture from enjoying the success of such later films as *Oliver & Company* and *The Little Mermaid*. "I agree with the public and my fans who have told me how they liked Fidget. I thought it was a great character, but the studio thought that the dog, Toby, would play better, so the publicity department used the dog. And the dog was a minor character who wasn't in half the picture!"

Fidget differed from his previous roles, though, in that Candido's tones were sped up to give the character a menacing, but humorous sound. However, recording the voice was like other jobs. Ratigan and Fidget are a pair, but their voice counterparts didn't work together. "That's one of my biggest disappointments in life," he remembers. "Really! I didn't get to work with Vincent Price, and our characters are together almost constantly. In fact, I've *never* met the man, and I've idolized him for years, and to think that we should have been recording together..."

While he breathed life into animated characters, Candido also established a reputable career elsewhere. Besides his music work, he was well known on radio and television. A regular on Jimmy Durante's radio and TV shows, the pair recorded hit singles, entertained royalty at the Palladium in London, and entertained Pope Pius XII, who gave Candido a ring that he still wears.

A point of trivia about Candy Candido: He was chosen by Bud Abbott to replace Lou Costello after Costello died. Abbott and Candido trained together daily for six months. They had plans to do motion pictures together and had just done a play when Abbott became ill, terminating their short partnership.

"I'm strictly an entertainer and a comic," Candido says. "I sing songs in funny voices, and I love to work in front of audiences. There's not much of that anymore, except when I work the state fairs. I love seeing the audience laugh, something I can't do when I'm under the microphone recording cartoon voices."

In summer 1989, Candido was hired once again by Disney to re-create a role he had recorded 35 years earlier, the Indian Chief in *Peter Pan* for the *Disney on Ice* show that tours the country. "When you see the show, you'll recognize my voice. It was a lot of fun doing him again. In fact, the director had never heard my voice! He said, 'Candy, since you've done this before, we won't do a rehearsal. We'll just go do the song.' So, I did the voices and the songs, but he laughed so much, we had to stop! We started over again, and I did it in two takes, and that was it! I loved being back and doing that character. Working on the same character after such a time lapse meant a great deal to me."

When he's not doing fairs or recording voices, Candido devotes time to his family. He and his wife will celebrate their 58th wedding anniversary on March 1, 1991. Together, Candy and Anita Candido have four children, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He recently finished his autobiography, which his daughter is editing. He collects his films on video, and is now looking for any of the 35 pictures he made for Monogram Studios in the 1930s and '40s, but so far, he can't find a single one.

He likes hearing from his fans. "When I had my heart attack a few years ago, I got over 2,000 cards, telegrams and letters. Did I cry! I love fans. Animation fans are some of the most devoted that any performer could ever find."

Still, Candido is in remarkably good health at 76. He has no plans to retire. "My career will be over when I can't talk anymore or when I die. I love to work, and I hope they keep calling me so I *never* retire."

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* **The Addams Family.** Film. Orion. D. Barry Sonnenfield. S. Caroline Thompson & Larry Wilson. Mortician: Anjelica Huston. Gomez: Raul Julia. (see item)

The Adventures of Pico & Columbus. Animated feature. Bavaria Film.

The Airtight Garage. Animated. S: Randy Lofficier.

The American. Film. P: Joel Silver. S: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

* **An American Tail.** Sequel. Spring '91. TV series. HB.

* **Annie.** Film sequel. D: Lewis Gilbert. Musical *Annie II* re-opened this fall.

Ant-Man. Film.

Archie. Film. S: Nora & Delia Ephron WBros.

Arzach: Film. P. Kirk Thatcher.

The Avengers. Film. John Steed. S: Sam Hamm.

* **Batman.** Sequel. S: Sam Hamm. Animated series in preparation for '92.

Beetle Bailey. Film.

Beetlejuice. Animated series on ABC & video. Film sequel. S: Warren Skaaren

Blackhawk. Film. Amblin. S: Dan Aykroyd.

Blade. Film. S: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin.

Blondie. Film musical. Disney. S: Alfred Uhry. P: Francine LeFrak, Dean Young

James Bond. Animated series. *Adventures of James Bond Jr.* Premieres fall '91.

Betty Boop. Animated *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery.* CBS. Film. D. R. Fleischer.

Brenda Starr. Film.

* **Bugs Bunny.** *Tiny Toon Adventures.* Spin-offs contemplated. (see article)

Bullwinkle. *Boris & Natasha* delayed by MCEG woes.

Captain America. Film. May go direct to video. Arena show tour w/ Spider Man opens spring '91.

Captain Planet. Animated series airing.

Cathy. Animated TV specials on CBS.

Charlie Chan. Film Chan: B.D. Wong. D: Fred Levinson. P: Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde.

Chicken Man. Animated spoof series. Calico.

Chip & Dale. *Rescue Rangers* airing. Film due '91.

City of Darkness. Film. S: Patrick Cirillo & Joe Gayton. P: Michael Douglas, Rick Bieber. Columbia.

* **Conan.** Film (see item)

Daredevil. TV series. (?) P: Shelley Duvall. FBC.

Deathlok. Film.

Conan the Possibility

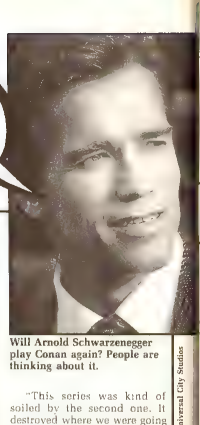
Always wanted to do Conan as a trilogy," states director John Milius matter-of-factly. "It was always planned that way. *Conan the Barbarian* was just part of the trilogy, and we actually knew what the other two films were supposed to be. But that never came to pass, because Dino De Laurentiis and I feuded and never worked on it together."

Milius is speaking of the film which served as one of Arnold Schwarzenegger's earliest adventures and spawned the sequel, *Conan the Destroyer*. Admittedly, that film, directed by Richard Fleischer, was ontirely different from its predecessor, featuring a lighter tone as opposed to Milius' more somber and menacing one.

"The first one was about strength," Milius explains. "The second was supposed to be about responsibility and the third about power. The whole concept was very Zen. Of course, you can get that from the first one: you can see that it's headed that way. The trilogy would have ended with the first film's opening shot.

"Conan creator Robert E. Howard said something interesting about the character," Milius adds. "Howard said he would stay up at night to write and this figure would come and stand behind him. He dared not look, otherwise it would cut him with an ax. This large, looming figure would tell him what to write and he would write until exhausted, when the dawn came and the figure would say, 'I'm leaving.' He said this spirit of Conan that was talking to him was pure violent, pre-Judeo-Christian ethic, and that's really what it was. Conan is human feeling and emotion unfiltered by civilization. Howard felt that Conan wasn't dumb, he just doesn't see any reason to argue about something. He would rather just cut his way through. When you're true to that, then you really start opening up some interesting areas. *Conan the Destroyer* was just a comic book fantasy. There was nothing pagan about it.

"The movie I made was *Conan the Barbarian*. It wasn't *Conan the Supethero, Conan the Comic Strip* or *Conan's Divorce*. When you went to see that movie, you were forewarned in regard to what you were about to see. The same thing with *Apocalypse Now*. You know what you were in for. Anyone who came out of *Apocalypse Now* saying, 'I was horrified. The whole thing was a bummer, man'...tough shit! The title tells you what you're going to get and it delivers. So did *Conan*



Will Arnold Schwarzenegger play Conan again? People are thinking about it.

Photo: Paul Canoso/Copyright 1980 Universal City Studios

"This series was kind of soiled by the second one. It destroyed where we were going and it just became a regular pap kind of thing. It made Conan like all the other sword and sorcery movies. It wasn't special anymore."

It's pointed out that Schwarzenegger, in CS#14, expressed interest in doing *Conan III if* someone like John Milius was involved.

"Arnold and I have talked for years about doing a Viking movie, which I think would be better than another Conan," he responds. "If we had done the second film the way we wanted to, we would still be making Conan movies. We certainly would have made the three of them and they would have all been hits. People wanted more of *Conan the Barbarian*, and I do think it would be great to some day do *Conan III*. If Arnold would be interested, so would I."

–Edward Gross

* **Dick Tracy.** No sequel!

Dinosaurs for Hire. Film S: Richard Finney & James Bonny. Fox. FX: Henson's Creature Shop.

DNAgents. Film. UA.

Dr. Strange. Film. Zoetrope. D: Alex Cox. P: FF. Coppola.

* **Dreamwalker.** Possible CBS TV movie pilot.

Evangeline. Film. Funnybook Films.

Family Dog. Animated series. CBS. P: S. Spielberg. Tim Burton, Dennis Klein

Fantastic Four. Film. Neue Constantin. P: Bernd Eichinger.

Far Side. Animated. TV.

Felix the Cat. Animated film. Produced, still no release.

Fish Police. Animated series HB. CBS. Film. S: G.K Wolf. P: M. Uslan. B. Melniker

The Flash. CBS TV series. WBros.

The Flintstones. Film. Fred: John Goodman. Universal & Amblin' April shooting?

Fu Manchu. Film. *Secret of Fu Manchu:* David Carradine

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series. *Garfield & Friends.*

Ghost Rider. Film. NLine.

* **The Green Hornet.** Film. Universal. S: Don Mancini. P: David Kirschner.

Green Lantern. Film. P: Joel

Visiting "The Addams Family"

They're still "mysterious and spooky" and "altogether ooky," but screenwriter Caroline Thompson says audiences shouldn't expect the TV show version of *The Addams Family* when they come to the big screen next summer.

The script which the *Edward Scissorhands* writer (STARLOG #162) and her co-writer Larry (*Beetlejuice*) Wilson came up with has more in common with Charles Addams' cartoons (as seen originally in *The New Yorker*) than the TV series they inspired in the mid-60s. "*The Addams Family* has been a really interesting experience of working with the studios. This was an assignment I took because I love Charles Addams' work," confesses Thompson.

"It's about a family of ghouls who live a very normal, domestic kind of life, only they do things like sharpening their fence and cutting the buds off their flowers. They did that kind of stuff on the TV show too, of course, but the TV show was really a Friday night sitcom aimed at kids. Actually, John Astin as Gomez came closest to my understanding of Addams' original cartoons."

In the new version, Gomez will be played by Raul (*Tequila Sunrise*) Julia and Morticia by Anjelica (*Prizzi's Honor*) Huston. Carel Struycken—seen as Mr. Homm guesting on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and the giant on *Twin Peaks*—plays Lurch. However, "the story really revolves around the Fester character," the screenwriter notes. Christopher Lloyd will play that pivotal role.

Barry Sonnenfield, the hot cinematographer of *Miller's Crossing* and *Raising Arizona*, is making his directorial debut on the project (now shooting). Orion Pictures will release *The Addams Family* in summer 1991.

"I think it'll be fun," Caroline Thompson remarks. "They could have gone many ways with it, they could have gone really downscale or done it really broad instead of going for the light touch."

—*Robert Pegg*

Double Mickey

It's Mickey Mouse (right) and Mickey Mouse (left) starring as Disney unleashes the first new Mouse cartoon in years, a colorful adaptation of Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*. It's playing with *The Rescuers Down Under*.

Prince Art: Copyright 1990 The Walt Disney Company

Triple Play

Box Office Bunny Art: Copyright 1990 Warner Bros. Inc.

In their first new theatrical cartoon short in years, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd and the 50-year-old Bugs Bunny burlesque movie theater etiquette. The Warner Bros. animation superstars are seen here, behind the scenes, rehearsing a sequence from "Box Office Bunny," due for release shortly.

Silver. Being written.

Grimjack. Film.

Gumby. Film.

Heroes for Hire. Film.

Honkytonk Sue. Film.

Human Target. Pilot. ABC. W/ Rick Springfield.

Incredible Hulk. TV movie.

Inspector Gadget. Live TV series. DIC. Family Channel.

Iron Man. Film. D: Stuart Gordon. Universal.

The Jetsons. New, live-action film. Universal.

Jo Jo. Film. P: Lee Caplin. S: Mike Chapman.

Jonny Quest. Film.

Judge Dredd. Film. S: Howard Chaykin & John Moore. P: Charles Lippincott.

Justice League. TV movie pilot. NBC. Lorimar.

Kaanga. Film. S: Geoff Edwards [also D]. S. Bernard. P: L. Caplin, B. Edwards, T. Adams.

Lt. Blueberry. Film.

Li'l Abner. TV. P: Max & Micheline Keller.

Little Nemo. Animated film. TMS Ent. Songs: Richard & Robert Sherman.

The Lone Ranger. Syndicated TV series. Separate film. D: John Landis. Universal.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Film. D: John Bruno. P: Ed Pressman. S: Bill Wisher.

Lucky Luke. TV series. Terence Hill, star. Silvio Berlusconi Comm.

MacDoodle Street. Film. Columbia. Based on Mark Alan Stamaty's *Village Voice* strip.

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. S/P: Larry Wilson. P: Walter Hill. Carolco.

Mandrake. Film. Italy's Pentafilm.

The Mask. Film. New Line.

Mickey Mouse. "The Prince & the Pauper" now out.

Mr. Jigsaw. Animated. Rankin-Bass.

Mr. Magoo. Film. P: S. Tisch. Animated film w/ niece, Megan Magoo.

Mr. X. Film. P: Jim Cash & Jack Epps Jr.

My Secret Identity. Syndicated sitcom.

Nancy. Film. P: P. Muller.

Negative Man. Bob Kane hero. Live series. Nelvana.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. S: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

The Phantom. Film. P: B. Sherlock, P. Sjoquist, J. Torv. R. Price. S: Ken Shadie. Creator Lee Falk, consultant.

Plastic Man. Film. New script underway. WB/Amblin.

* **Prince Valiant.** Animated series. For Family Channel.

The Prowler. Film. Funnybook Films.

The Punisher. Film.

Radio Boy. Animated. Rankin-Bass.

Reid Fleming. Film. Jim Belushi. S: creator David Boswell. P: Matt Weisman. Joseph Loeb II.

Richie Rich. Film. RR: Fred Savage. P: Joel Silver. John Davis. Seeks studio.

RoboCop 3. S: Frank Miller & Fred Dekker [D].

* **The Rocketeer.** Film. Disney. Rocketeer: Bill Campbell. D: Joe Johnston. S: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo. P: Lawrence & Charles Gordon, Lloyd Levin. Now shooting.

Rover Dangerfield. Animated film.

The Saint. Film. P: Robert Evans. Paramount.

Scooby Doo. Film. W Bros.

Secret Agent X-9. Animated film.

Sgt. Preston of the Yukon. TV revival projected.

* **Sgt. Rock.** Film. P: Joel Silver, Bob Zemeckis. S: Jeff

Boam. WB.

* **The Shadow.** Film. S: David Koepp. P: Martin Bregman. Universal.

* **The She-Hulk.** Film. S/D: Larry Cohen. W/Brigitte Nielsen.

The Silver Surfer. Film.

The Simpsons. Animated series. FBC. (see article)

* **Spider-Man.** Film dead at Columbia. Arena show w/ Cap A opens spring '91. Stage musical. S & lyrics: Barry Harman. Music: Keith Herrmann. EXP: Stan Lee, David J. Nash, Joseph Calamari.

Sub-Mariner. Film.

Suicide Squad. CBS TV pilot. Lorimar.

Superboy. Syndicated TV.

Superman. *Superman V.* S: Mark Jones & Cary Bates. *May* lease in FL.

* **Swamp Thing.** TV. USA.

* **Tales from the Crypt.** HBO series. Decision to do more episodes pending.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** Animated series in syndication & on CBS. Film sequel due spring. D: Michael Pressman. W/David Warner. New Line. Live stage show now touring.

Terry & the Pirates. Film. S: Jules Feiffer. P: G. Kirkwood, J. Hyde. EXP: Stan Weston.

Thor. Film. Stonebridge.

Time Beavers. Animated TV series. Kushner-Locke.

* **Tin-Tin.** Animated series. Nelvana. Bows on HBO fall '91.

* **Tom & Jerry.** Animated, 75-minute film due '92. Animated *Tom & Jerry Kids* airing.

Trouble with Girls. Film. 20th Fox & Funnybook Films. S: Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones. P: M. Pepler, N. Tabachnick.

Two-Fisted Tales. Half-hour anthology. FBC.

Valentina. 13-episode half-hour TV series. Stars Dementra Hampton. Reteitalia.

Vampirella. Films. S/D: Jim Wynorski.

V for Vendetta. Film. WB.

WARP. Film. S/P: Mark Victor & Michael Grais.

Watchmen. Film. S: Sam Hamm. P: Joel Silver. D: Terry Gilliam. Seeks studio.

Wizard of Id. Film. S: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen.

Wolverine. Film.

Wonder Woman. TV series.

The X-Men. Animated five-episode mini-series for FBC. Marvel Productions.

Zen, Intergalactic Ninja. Film. Animated series.

Zippyvision. Film. S: Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin.

Zorro. TV series. Airs on Family Channel.

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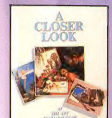

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